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NEW

SKETCHES OF EVERY-DAY LIFE:

A DIARY.

TOGETHER WITH

STRIFE AND PEACE.

BY

FREDRIKA BREMER.

TRANSLATED

BY MARY HOWITT.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1844.

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PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

In presenting the present volume of my series of Miss Bremer's works, circumstances compel me to some explanation, not only on my own account, but for the interests of translated literature. An individual has proceeded not only to thrust himself into the very midst of my series, but has made an impudent attempt to injure my edition, as if I were publishing it in too costly a style.

It is a fact which testifies most strikingly to the honourable feeling, both of the press and amongst the publishers generally, that to my knowledge not only many of the respectable journals have refused to yield to the pressing entreaties made to them to sanction and introduce these dishonourable interlopers, but publishers who are importers of American works have declined to sell these cheap American pennyworths when sent to them. *There has yet been found but one man* out of the vast mass of English publishers who has been mean enough to thrust himself into the series which I had introduced at my own risk, so much to the satisfaction of the Public; and what is more, *there has not been found a single literary person, either in this country or America, who would put his or her name to another translation.*

But this one man has, forsooth, done it *for public good!* My edition was not cheap enough for the people, and the works were too good to be withheld from the people. For *public good*, therefore, he pokes himself in just before me on the literary causeway. Now there never yet was an especially mean transaction perpetrated which was not immediately coloured over with the convenient ochre of public good. But what public good?

If the man really wanted nothing more than that a popular edition should appear, he had only to inquire of me, as any honest, disinterested man would have done, and he would have found that in due course this would appear, with all the advantages of deliberate correction and improvement. But, in his zeal for public good, he put no such query to me—for the very sufficient reason that that was not his intention. His object was a *public good* turned carefully into his *private pocket.* Had he wanted public good solely, there was no need of his treading on my toes to extract it; the world is wide, and there is a world of excellent matter in foreign literature, if he had the sense or the information to enable him to collect it. I have no objection to cheap editions of any good translations that he or any other man may undertake on his own original sagacity; but what right has he to make me a jackal to *such a city lion?* I am as great an advocate for cheap translations as he can be; but I say, in heaven's name let not translators and publishers become a crowd of cannibals, to devour each other. I do not interfere with the speculations of Smith, or Clarke, or Tomkins—let them at least be good enough to let alone mine.

If a man will, however, advocate the *public good*, let him at least dare and risk something for it. But this man does not risk a doit for it. He does not move till he sees that I have tested the risk, and *created a public for the work;* when he steps in, passes over the volumes on which I am at the moment engaged, and pounces on the next before me. This marks the Prowler and the Literary Bodysnatcher.*

Let it be clearly understood then, that this question is not at all one of a cheap edition; that is a matter of course; but it is a question whether it be fair and honourable for a man who ventures nothing himself, who learns and acquires nothing himself, to lurk as a Literary Buccaneer in the steps of authors of established reputation, till they have opened to his greedy eyes a safe means of profiting by their taste, and tact, and experience.

It is one thing to spend years in acquiring foreign languages; to spend other years in visiting foreign countries, and poring through the vast mass of foreign productions, in order to discover and pick out what is really worthy of being introduced to your countrymen,—one thing, when you have done all this, at a most serious cost of time, labour, and money; have then taken all other risks and in fact *created a public;*—and *another thing*, for a man who has done nothing of all this, to avail himself of the fruits of your labours, and of the public favour you have raised.

Such a system, I am sure, when once exposed, will, by all honourable minds, be stamped as most unfair, and as most prejudicial to the interests of good literature. The case is not my own merely; it is that of Mrs. Austin, and of almost every translator of note; and the consequence, if it go on, will be to deter all authors of talent and repute from the risk, labour, and research necessary for the selection of what is good, and from giving the time necessary for the production of excellence; the work of translation will fall into the hands of anonymous mediocrity, and become a disgrace to our literature.

For, whatever may be said respecting cheap editions, every one who knows anything of the subject will agree with me, that no good author will be found, who can possibly remunerate himself on such works. In that form they cannot be at first introduced; for they will not be, at first, bought to a paying extent. A library edition is the first and natural step. It is in this form that a moderate edition alone can be put out to test the public taste; a cheap edition *must of necessity* be a larger one, and it must involve a great loss if it do not succeed. But in a library form, it will be at once purchased by the librarians, and the wealthy to a certain extent; and, if good, will acquire that speedy *eclat* which will enable the publishers, as the most eminent are now doing, to bring out popular editions, *at once cheap and perfect.*

These people, therefore, who, like the harpies of old, pounce down on the viands which you set on the public table, *so far from being the public benefactors which they pretend, are actually the destroyers of the natural and true benefaction—the issue, in due course, of authentic and perfected editions.* I will presently make this very case an evidence of this.

* In a preface to one of his surreptitious publications, this person puts on a face of the most innocent simplicity, and assures us that he never yet meddled with anybody's copyrights. Certainly not, for the best of reasons—he knows the law would then lay hold of him. There *are* persons—very sensible persons in their way—who never take what the law would make them smart for; never carry off what is too heavy, or touch what is too hot. But the catalogue of this person's Buccaneer plunder, published by himself, shews that he seizes on any author's works the first moment that the copyright *technically* expires. There are various works of Sir Walter Scott, Crabbe, Keats, Mrs. Hemans, etc., which he has pounced on without the smallest regard of delicacy towards the authors or their families. They who will seize copyrights *immediately after* the law connives at it, would as certainly, but for the terror of the law, seize them *before.* Thank heaven, that authors have the protection of a Copyright Act, or they would certainly be *brained* by the Buccaneers between their own houses and the printers, and their MSS. carried off.

I myself have not, as this individual would insinuate, published with a view to large profits. I commenced the undertaking, in the face of the advice and warnings of the most experienced publishers, with the probability of a considerable loss. But I determined, at any cost, if possible, to introduce these works, and I glory that it has been *a woman* who has done this. My editions have been moderate, so as to allow me every opportunity of revision by comparison with the latest editions of the originals; and any one who is capable of comparing my new editions with the originals, will see how carefully they have been brought up, *verbatim et literatim*, to them. So much so that the amiable authoress herself, while highly dissatisfied with the German translations, has expressed her warmest sense of "den samvets grannhet och den nit hvarmed ni går tillväga vid Er öfversättning"—'the conscientious accuracy and zeal with which you execute your translations.'

And what have we got instead, from this advocate of public good? *An importation and reprint of anonymous abridgments of these works, got up and curtailed both in style and quantity into the limits suited to the American cheap market, and abounding with Americanisms, which all well-educated persons will be careful not to introduce into their families;* as "she is a going"—"vanity *belittles* a woman"—"sleighs, and sleds, and sleighing," for sledges and sledging—"surroundings" for environs; with such Yankee slang as "he got mad in love, and she gave him the bag," etc.; as any one may convince himself who looks into these eye-destroying small prints.

That it is not a mere assertion that these are, in fact, abridgments, or at least miserably garbled copies, I will speedily shew; but, in the first place, it may be as well to give the history of these American translations. Every one who has paid the least attention to what has been going on in America, knows that the American publishers have been tearing each other limb from limb in the matter of reprints of English new works. Works which cost a guinea each here, were reprinted there immediately for a shilling each. Such became the fury of American competition, that not one such reprint of such a work appeared, but half a dozen simultaneously. The madness was soon so great that these people were seen advertising, one against another, *sixpenny works*, of which the mere paper was worth twice the money. To such a pitch was this carried, that anything like native literature was quashed. No native author could obtain a copyright remuneration. There was no profit to give it. *Our* authors supplied their market, and *their* authors were almost universally compelled to come to this country to obtain anything for a new work; and all sensible men lamented, and still lament, that under such circumstances no national American literature can possibly arise. What the result of this competition-mania has been many a publishing-house could show in frightful accounts on the wrong sides of their ledgers. The story, however, is plainly told every day in their newspapers. The New-York correspondent of the *Boston Evening Gazette*, a family newspaper of July 8, 1843, says:—"As to the cheap republications—the system is dead. A few houses, the Harpers, Winchesters, etc., print occasionally; but from the best information I can get, *nothing is gained by it*, and probably, publications will go back to a medium price, and a shape suitable for preservation—'a consummation devoutly to be wished.'"

Such is the upshot of the American cheap republication mania; but the mischief did not stop here. They began to pour these wretched and maimed reprints of our works in shoals back upon us at home. Our literature too was threatened with annihilation from this source. Fortunately we got an Act putting a stop to the entrance of these pale and wasted ghosts of our own creation from the world beyond the Atlantic: but translators are still exposed to the whole evil. Accordingly, no sooner did my translations of Miss Bremer's works begin to attract attention, than these ravenous American publishers began furiously to translate those at which I had not arrived, so as to get the start of their brother publishers, who reprinted mine. What sort of translations these were likely to be may be imagined. I had spent two years in the preparation for, and in the execution of mine—these were thrown out in a few weeks. They professed to *translate from the Swedish*, and to replace all the passages omitted in the German translations.

These are the translations which our London Buccaneer has avowedly reprinted. What kind of an article he had got hold of he knew no more than the man in the moon, for he had no means of knowing, being totally ignorant of both Swedish and German. But it was enough for him that there was a translation *of some sort* that he could rush into the field with, and a Yankee puff ready written to his hands, which he took wholly for his advertisement. The trick succeeded to a certain extent; for who was, at once, to expose it? So little have the language and the literature of the North of Europe been cared for by us, that I much question whether there be three persons connected with the London Press who are masters of the Swedish and Norwegian languages, both of which are necessary for the translation of these works. Accordingly, one or two of our respectable journals were unwarily caught in the snare, and boldly declared, in noticing these reprints, that they were excellent, and equal to mine.

The simple fact, however is, and I am now in a condition to demonstrate it most satisfactorily, as I now print my translation of one of the stories which has been reprinted from the American translation—"Strife and Peace;" and it will be in the power of any one to test the matter, and see that these American translations *are not at all translated from the Swedish, but from the German; and so far*, as I will directly show, *from replacing the numerous important passages omitted by the carelessness of the German translator, the Americans purposely cut away a vast number more, in order to reduce the work to as cheap a quantity* as possible.

That they are translated from the German, and not from the Swedish, every page will prove, *for the blunders and misconceptions of the German translator*, often very ludicrous, *are most regularly and carefully copied.* As the Chinese, when they receive an order from England to make some pieces of china, to complete again a broken set, always make an exact *fac simile* of the china sent, copying most precisely every flaw and defect, as well as the regular pattern; so has the American translator done here. As I have already stated, Miss Bremer complains heavily of these ludicrous errors of the German, which have thus been so completely transferred into the cheap English reprints. It would exceed the limits of a preface to enumerate these. I will, however give a very good specimen of them, and pass on to the still more serious matter of the omissions.

Near the end of "Strife and Peace," Mrs. Astrid, writing to her friend the Bishop, tells him that all her troubles are now over, and bids him come and rejoice with her. "Kom," she says, "och mottag min anger öfver min klenmodighet, öfver min knot; kom, och hjelp mig att tacka!" "Come and receive my contrition for my pusillanimity, for my repining, come and help me to express my thanks!" This the German translates—"Kommen sie, und helfen sie mir denken!" Which the American translator, with Chinese fidelity, copies, and the Englishman as faithfully reprints—"*Come and help me to think!*"

As to the *completeness* of the translation, let us take at random a dip into "Strife and Peace." The chapter on Nordland, a chapter which, independently of the letter it contains, consists only of six paragraphs, has in Smith's edition, two out of those six omitted, besides a portion of the letter itself. These two passages are extremely descriptive of life and

scenery, and make no less than fourteen lines of the original. At page 16 occurs another omission, descriptive of the domestic life; page 27 another of no less than nine lines, descriptive of the wild Halling dance. this is immediately followed by another, descriptive of the Halling costume. On the next column of the same page is another, descriptive of the music of the Hardanger viol. All these break up dreadfully the beautiful and wild picture of Norwegian life and festivity.

Take again the mountain journey to Bergen, page 32 of Smith's reprint, there are two omissions; page 33, *three* others. One of these alone consists of nine lines of the original, and relates to most curious and characteristic matter, to the waymarks of stones piled in that wild and desolate region, where the actors of the story fall into the utmost peril and perplexity. Pages 34 and 35 occur two or three more, and so on through the book.

What is remarkable in *this* volume is, that the *German translation*, unlike those of the other volumes, *is perfect*. I believe there is not a line of the original omitted; while here in this reprint from the American, declared to be *from the Swedish, with the German omissions replaced*, there abound omissions of the most material character.

What is still more remarkable is, that this work, "Strife and Peace," is unquestionably, in point of style, the most eloquent and beautiful composition of all Miss Bremer's writings, which renders it tenfold more unpardonable thus to have mangled it.

Another curious fact is, that all the mottoes, and indeed, the greater part of the poetry, of this volume are from Norwegian poets; given purposely by Miss Bremer, as the scene is laid in that country. Much of this poetry is left out: and the rest, not being understood, retains, in some instances, only a dim shadow of the meaning of the original; in others, has no connexion with it whatever. We have verses with a sonorous, Mrs. Hemans-like flourish of trumpets, but which as translations of what they pretend to represent, might just as well be taken out of any book that the translator had at hand.

For instance, these eight lines of the poet Munch have, I may say, a rude simplicity about them, and certainly nothing in the world about "flowers of love and life; or which shed their fragrance on our bier or clay-cold sod."

> Hvad er det saa meer?
> Entgang den seer
> Dog en venlig Strimmel
> Af Hjemmets lysende Himmel,
> Engang den leur
> Under Templets tonende Buer—
> En slig Sekund
> Vëier vel op imod Dødens Blund.

Yet these have their sounding substitute of half the number of lines.—

> The flowers of love and hope we gather here,
> Shall yet bloom for us in the heaven of God;
> They shed not their last fragrance o'er our bier,
> They lie not withered on the cold grave sod.

In these twelve lines of Wergeland—(as given by ed);—

> The first time, yes the first time flings
> A glory even on trivial things;
> It passes soon, a moment's falling,
> Then it is also past recalling.
>
> The grass itself has such a prime:
> Man prizes most spring's flowery time,
> When first the verdure decks earth's bosom,
> And the heart leaf foretels the blossom.
>
> Thus God lets all, however low,
> In 'the first time' a triumph know;
> Even in the hour when death impendeth,
> And life itself to heaven ascendeth.

Are by the hydraulic press of Smith *and Co.* squeezed into these four:—

> Fairer the first faint blushes of the dawn
> Than the full splendour of the noon day light;
> Dearer the first pale flowers in early spring time born,
> Than all that summer boasts of fair and bright.

Of six extracts from the bard of Rein, in "the Evening Hour in the Sitting Room," three, that is, one half of them, are suppressed. So also eleven fine lines of Foss, opening this chapter, and three lines from Velhaven, which occur in the middle of the chapter, are transplanted and substituted for them. A line of Tegnér in this chapter is also omitted. Eight striking lines of a Norwegian song, introduced as a motto to the chapter on the Halling dance, and illustrative of this festive occasion, are totally omitted. So also the stanza introductory to the chapter on Christmas, from Bjerregaard.

> Kommer J sorglöse, vingede Smaae!
> Kornbaard for eder ved Laderne staae.
> Juul er i vente;
> Da skal J hente
> Föde fra guldgule, brödsvangre Straae.

But the number of these omissions is almost *numberless*: perhaps the most singular of all is that of the very passage in which the Strife ceases, and the Peace is concluded, by the side of the well, consisting of eleven lines.

These attempts to palm off the work, spite of all this mutilation, as from the Swedish by the introduction of Fru instead of Mrs.; Oefwerstinna, meant for Öfverstinna, that is simply, a colonel's lady; Herre for Herr, or plain Mr., etc., are quite ludicrous. At the same time almost every original word or proper name introduced, are erroneously introduced. The translator, not aware that the diæresis or other peculiar mark over the vowels in Swedish, does not merely change the sound, but converts the word into a totally different sense—gives us these sometimes in the English with the oddest effect. Thus we have Skal and Skäl indiscriminately, while he all the while means Skål—the three have really the different meanings of, a husk or peal, a motive, and a health! The same obtuseness shews itself in marking the nice traits of humour and character for which Miss Bremer is so eminent. We are told that Susanna had two different natures, which are designated by contractions of her two Christian names—Barbara Susanna, into *Barbra* and *Sanna*. But this distinction is too delicate for the translator, and he regularly prints them Barbara and Sanna, whereby the indication is totally lost. But to go through all the wilful omissions, and the ignorant misconceptions and disfigurements, would be too much.

These remarks apply not only to this but to the whole series. In them too is exactly copied the German translation, even to the very errors of the press. In the H—— Family, the German translator has unwarrantably altered almost every proper name both of place and person. Even the name of the narrator of the story—Miss Christina Beata Hvardagslag—is converted into *Charlotte* Beata *Everyday*; Lönquist, into Lonberg; Bergstrom, into Britmund; Roslagen, into Koslapean; Berndts, into Berends, etc., etc. All these are carefully copied into the American translation. The notes of the authoress in the original are omitted, and notes on totally different subjects by the German translator, are also given. The German has taken the liberty to foist in whole sentences of sentimental prosing, which the American has also given. In short, he has never seen the original, and his translation is an impudent and worthless imposition.

So much for translation from the Swedish, and for the restoration of omitted passages.

Is this then the manner in which we should wish to see the best productions of foreign writers introduced into our language? Is it such works as these that any of our respectable reviewers will be found introducing to notice, and recommending as on a par with those which have been the result of long and careful study, and of the most anxious care and labour to produce perfect both in sense and substance?

Whoever has come in contact with foreign authors of eminence knows that it is a subject of sore complaint that their works are translated into our

language generally in a most slovenly state, and obtain circulation by the side of those of the most faithful and able character. Whoever gives circulation to such inferior or defective translation does a fourfold injury—to the author, the honest translator, the public, and the literary character of the country.

Since writing thus far, I have seen that the introducer of these American translations has announced one of Miss Bremer's new work, "A Diary." This certainly cannot be from the Swedish, which is scarcely yet out, and of which I know that sheets have been transmitted by the authoress only to myself. It must, therefore, be from the German translation—which is by far the most defective German translation that has yet appeared of any of Miss Bremer's works, having omissions of several pages at once.

I see too that another of the Buccaneers has taken the field with announcements of translations from Miss Bremer; and who?—No other than the very man who seized bodily on the Rev. Mr. Muzzey's "American Maiden," placed another name on the title-page, dubbed it "The English Maiden," and sent it forth as an original work! stating gravely in his preface, that in this, his work, "he had *been very careful to inculcate the morality of the Bible!!*" Mr. Muzzey, amazed to see extracts from his own work in American papers, under another title and another man's name, hastened over to London, confronted the impudent freebooter, and issued an English edition of his own work.

In such hands as these, what beautiful translations of Miss Bremer may we not expect! The Rev. Sydney Smith has ably trounced the Americans for *their* dishonesty; we entreat him to hold the balance even, and chastise this dishonesty towards Americans on the part of our countrymen. Swindling is the same thing on one side of the water as on the other, and nothing more disgraceful to national character can be done on the other side of the Atlantic.

But at these men I am not surprised; they are only labouring in their ordinary vocation. The real cause of surprise is that any journal can be found, holding a respectable rank, which will sanction and encourage them. Their miserable activity is the natural result of such patronage. It is for the English Press, which is the guardian of the honour and integrity of our literature, to protect us from this state of things. It is for it to say whether it shall be possible for translations of excellent works from abroad to be made with the necessary care and leisure; or whether the moment a translator of known tact and reputation announces a fresh work, he or she shall be torn to pieces by a pack of hungry wolves. It is for it to see that when we have a cheap translation, it shall *at least* be sound and honest.

I repeat my testimony to the honourable feeling already shewn by the great body of the press in the present instance, and my confidence that all that is so obviously necessary will be effected by it. I have now stated what it was my duty to state in support of the purity and integrity of the translations of these works. In my own case I have spared no pains to ensure this; and I have had always at hand the ever-ready assistance of Mr. Howitt—an enthusiastic admirer of these Northern tongues. My plan has been when my translation was complete to read it aloud to him, while he held the original in his hand, so that no word or no misconception might escape; and I confidently, therefore, present my edition to the public as faithful and complete.

The *Examiner*, in a flattering notice of one of my translations, regretted that I had not given some more account of Miss Bremer herself, adding that she was in reduced circumstances. I am happy to say that wherever that information was obtained, it was totally unfounded. Miss Bremer is not only of a substantial family, but connected with the nobility of the country. It is not my intention to give a line respecting Miss Bremer more than is agreeable to herself; but in her kind interest in my translation she has voluntarily offered to write me a Sketch of her Literary Life, which, with whatever is proper to be added, will appear in my next issue—the concluding one of Miss Bremer's published stories.

Miss Bremer lately addressed to me these words: "Sweden is a poor but noble country; England is a rich and noble one; but in spirit they are sisters, and should know each other as such. Let us, dear Mrs. Howitt, contribute to that end!"

I am convinced that England and Sweden, including the fine kingdom of Norway, may become in both intellectual and commercial relations far better known to each other to the greatest mutual advantage. No one could have opened up more successfully the intellectual intercourse than Miss Bremer; and I regard it as one of the happiest and most honourable events of my life—of which nothing can deprive me—that I have introduced her beautiful and ennobling writings, not only to these islands, but to the whole vast English family. I have sent them expressly to Australia; and in America, in India, at the Cape, as well as in Australasia, *Miss Bremer* is now a household word—nay, more—a household possession and blessing.

MARY HOWITT.

The Grange, Upper Clapton,
Dec. 18*th*, 1843.

A DIARY.

THIS DAY—A LIFE.
THORILD.

Stockholm, 1*st November*, 18—

IN THE MORNING HOUR.

"ANOTHER day, another revolution of light and shade. Enjoy thy existence, sayest thou, holy dawn of morning, animating glance of love, beam of God! Thou wakest me once more from my darkness, givest me a day, a new existence, a whole life. Thou lookest upon me in this light and sayest, follow the moments! They scatter in their flight light and flowers; they conceal themselves in clouds, but only to shine forth again all the lovelier; follow them, and let not the shade find thee before thou hast begun to live!"

Thus thought I with a great, home-departed spirit, as in the dawn of morning I awoke and saw the beam of daylight penetrating into my chamber, and involuntarily stretched forth my arms to meet it. It was neither bright nor cheerful; it was the misty beam of a November day, but still light from the light which brightened my life's-day, and I greeted it with love.

May the light of my life's-day, like that of the morning, be—an ascending one! whether its beam shine through mist or through clear air is all one! if only the day increase, if only life brighten.

After an absence of ten years, I visit anew the home of my childhood; whether for a longer or a shorter time circumstances will determine. Independent in fortune and position in life, I can now, after a captivity of many years, enjoy freedom, and at thirty years of age follow merely my own will.

I arrived here last evening, a few days earlier than I was expected, and thus could not by any possibility flatter myself that on my account the house of my stepmother was so splendidly lighted up as I found it on stopping before it. Ah, no! On the contrary, it was terribly difficult to find anybody who would trouble themselves in the least about me and my things.

At length I stumbled upon a maid-servant, whose kind countenance and manner immediately pleased me, and who, as soon as she perceived who I was, busied herself actively about me and mine. "Ah!" exclaimed she, as she led me up a winding staircase covered with carpeting, which led to my room, "how vexatious it is! Her Grace gives to-day a little ball to celebrate Miss Selma's birthday, and now they have taken off their cloaks in your room, Miss; how it looks! But see! they did not expect you earlier than next week, and, therefore, nothing is in order."

"It does not signify!" said I, as with some consternation I looked round the room which my step-mother in her letter had praised as an 'excellent chamber,' and which was now filled with gentlemen's and ladies' cloaks, with fur boots and over-shoes. The music of one of Strauss's intoxicating waltzes came from below, producing an effect half-animating, half-depressing; and I thought, if I up here, sit myself down quietly among these empty human habiliments and listen to this music, and think, "here sit I, a forlorn stranger in the country, whilst they without are making merry with dancing, then—I shall become melancholy, and shall begin to write an appendix to Solomon's sermon, 'All is vanity!' But if I too go down among those joyful people, and entertain myself with looking at them, and whilst they whirl about in the gallopade and the waltz, make my——"

A dim idea unfolded itself suddenly in my head, like the butterfly from the chrysalis. I took hold of Karin—such was the name of my obliging maiden—and prayed her to inform nobody in the house of my arrival, but on the contrary, to assist me in putting on my black silk dress and other things, to make a hasty toilet. I wished to sneak into the company unannounced and unknown. Karin understood my idea, thought it merry, and helped me quickly and efficiently; so that in half an hour I could show myself with honour in the saloon, and hoped to remain unobserved by a part of the '*foule*' which, as I knew of old, was very important in the soirées of my stepmother. And to tell the truth, I was not altogether dissatisfied to be able to look about me a little, and, as it were, to prepare myself for acquaintance with relatives whom I had now not seen for so many years.

As I entered the dancing-room a gallopade was being danced. I stole along by the wall, and soon fortunately found a place in a corner. The music, the noise, and the strong blaze of light, almost bewildered my head. When I had a little recovered my senses, I spied about curiously after the countenances of my connexions; above all, my eye sought for my young sister Selma, although almost without hope of being able to recognise in the young girl of twenty, the tender, delicate child which I had not seen for ten years.

"But the sole daughter of the house," thought I, "the heroine of the day, must still be easy to discover among the others: she must certainly precede every one in the dance, and must

be put forward and honoured before all others!" and I sought inquiringly among the couples who were floating round in the gallopade. The dance seemed to me enchanting.

'*Ah, les reines du bal!*' said now an elderly gentleman of an animated, and at the same time somewhat faded exterior and relaxed features, who stood near me; and I saw a young officer of dragoons dancing onward with two young ladies who riveted my whole attention, so beautiful and brilliant were they. I considered it a settled thing that one of these must be my sister Selma; but which of them? They had a remarkably great sisterly resemblance, and yet on near observation it was a peculiar manner which made them unlike. The lively, refined, captivating grace which distinguished the one who was dressed in white gauze and blond, was wanting in the other, who was dressed in bright rose-coloured crape, and whose growth was somewhat larger, yet who mean time was unquestionably the handsomer. Her dancing was characterised by that joyously-bounding life, which is said to constitute the spirit of Fanny Elsler's dancing, whilst the dancing of the other—the white one—had more of the noble pure grace which I myself have admired in Maria Taglioni. Either might be Selma. The more I regarded the white one, the more I wished that she might be my sister.

But is it, indeed, possible, that the somewhat self-willed doll, 'little me,' as Selma called herself in her childish years, should have changed itself into this sylph-like being, whose countenanec beamed with soul and innocent joy?

The other had more of the proud SELF, which looked forth in the child Selma; perhaps she might be my sister Selma? Should I be able to love her much?

Whilst this contest between the red and white rose went on in my mind, and I purposely demanded no explanation from my neighbour, but would await the answer from chance, I heard the gentleman who had exclaimed, '*les reines du bal*,' congratulated by another upon being '*a rich old bachelor*.'

"The life of a rich old bachelor," said he with a sigh, which awakened in me the thought that he found himself burdened with as many wives and children as Rochus Pumpernickel—"the life of a rich old bachelor is indeed a continual"——

"The life of a rich old bachelor," said the first speaker also with a sigh, "is a splendid breakfast, a tolerably flat dinner, and a most miserable supper!"

Whilst I listened to the communication of the two gentlemen, and observed '*les reines du bal*,' I remarked that a man between thirty and forty, in naval uniform, of a frank and strong exterior, with a pair of serious, honest eyes—observed me. This gave me pleasure—I do not know why. I also remarked that the son of Neptune steered ever nearer and nearer to me, and—unexpectedly seated himself by my side. I cannot at this moment rightly comprehend how we came into discourse, and still less how I came to confide to him my observations on the tw o stars of the ball, and last of all, how I could feel so communicative and well acquainted with a person entirely strange to me. The person smiled at my confidential communications, and inquired if I wished for any explanations from him? I replied that this evening I had set out on a voyage of discovery, and had taken Chance for my helmsman, and would have him to govern the voyage. My new acquaintance warned me of the danger of giving myself up to such a helmsman, and sought with delicacy to dive into the intention of my undertaking. I answered evasively; the conversation was jesting, and it seemed to me as if a great ship of war was amusing itself by chasing a little brig, which nevertheless succeeded, by rapidly tacking about, perpetually to escape it. In the mean time we came, quite unexpectedly, into very deep water, namely, into the innermost of the soul and of life, and we soon were contending about that which constitutes the highest weal or woe of human life. We had on this subject entirely different views, because, whilst I, in the calmness of temper and clearness of thought, sought for the haven of felicity, the son of Neptune found it merely in the life and strength of feeling. I asserted that in this way he never would come into the haven, but would always find himself on the outside of it, in the open stormy sea. He had nothing to say against this. It was exactly upon the open stormy sea that he had found happiness. I declared myself opposed to the disquiet of a Viking life; he against a life of quiet and ease. I spoke of the danger of shipwrecks under the guidance of the feelings, and remembered Odin's words in Havamal, "Insecure is that which one possesses in the breast of another." The seaman betook himself to Christianity, and thought with the Apostle, that without love all things in the world were sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I bowed myself before human love: this was precisely my proposition. But in regard to private relationships, I found it to be in the highest degree necessary to be able to sing at all times,

"I care for nobody, nobody,
And nobody cares for me!"

The seaman laughed, but shook his head and said, "You would not be able to sing so, and could not sing so, if you had had the happiness—to have children."

"Perhaps not," replied I, in an indifferent tone; pleased in myself to find that my new acquaintance was, as I had already suspected, a married man, and the father of a family.

We were here interrupted by the ending of the gallopade and the dancing ladies seeking for resting places, on which my neighbour stood up. The view through the dancing room was now freer, and permitted one through the open doors to look into the saloon, where turbaned "gracious ladies" occupied the divans, and several gentlemen with stars and ribbons moved about them.

"Ah, there she is!" thought I, with sudden emotion, as a lady of noble figure and noble bearing came in sight, whilst in conversation with an elderly gentleman, she slowly approached the dancing-room.

Yes, that was she; still the same as ever in appearance, grave, beautiful, and tasteful in dress. I recognised the strings of real pearls, with jewelled clasps, which surrounded her neck and her lovely arms, which I would so willingly have kissed in my childhood; I recog-

nised the beautiful countenance, and the carriage, so imposing, and yet so full of grace. She was still the same as, twenty years ago, she had stood a half-divinity before my eyes in the magnificent saloons of the capital; when she, as wife of the "District Governor," did the honours, with the looks of a queen; yes, she was still the same as I then had seen her, and nothing more distinguished have I seen since then —although I have looked well about me in the world—and probably never shall, and yet . . . It was my stepmother! My heart beat not lightly, as I saw her slowly approach the side where I sate, and anticipated the moment of recognition; it came.

The glance of my stepmother fell on me; she started, and looked again observantly; I stood up; she hastened towards me, and we soon embraced each other; not without mutual embarrassment, which the surprise, and mutual excuses—from me, on account of my arrival; from her, on the condition of my chamber—helped to conceal. My stepmother now called 'Selma! Selma!' and the white sylph floated towards us, and I clasped my young sister in my arms, glad that she was 'the white rose,' and delighted to see such a kindly joy beam from her dear blue eyes, as blushing, she heartily bade me welcome.

At this moment my glance involuntarily met that of my former neighbour, who from some little distance observed us, with a gentle, half-melancholy smile. After this, my stepmother called 'Flora!' and beckoned; but Flora, occupied in lively discourse with some gentlemen, did not immediately hear. Selma hastened to her, took her by the arm, and returned with her to me. I saw 'the red rose,' the other queen of the ball, before me. Selma whispered, "Sophia! thy and my cousin, Flora!"

My cousin Flora Delphin, whom I now saw for the first time, greeted me courteously; and after a short and indifferent conversation, she turned again to her gentlemen.

"For this evening no more acquaintance, my sweet Selma," I now, besought. "I know that I here must have several, to me, yet unknown relations; but I would rather defer making their acquaintance till another time.

"All the better!" answered she; "then can I yet a while alone belong to you. I shall not dance this dance—I must chat with you." And now, as a quadrille was played, Selma's partner approached; she excused herself to him, and introduced him to a young lady who was sitting, and whom he led to the dance. On this, she seated herself near me, asked with warm interest after things which concerned me, and reminded me, with a voice full of tender emotion, how I had been so good to her in her childhood, told her tales, had brought about pastimes, and little merry-makings and such like, in order to please her.

"This time, Selma," interrupted I, "you must tell me tales; but, of course, only true ones; because I am totally unacquainted with the world which surrounds me here, and would willingly be conducted into it; or much rather, without any trouble on my part, have it brought to me."

"Ah! you have addressed yourself exactly to the right person," said Selma, with comic dignity; "and in order to begin now my office of chief mistress of the ceremonies, thus—who shall I, in the first place, have the honour of introducing to you in this company?"

"O! the stately lady there, with the bird-of-paradise waving in the turban of silver gauze, and in a dress of black velvet—she, who now talks with your mamma and laughs—a fine woman; she might represent the queen of night."

"So she is," answered Selma laughing. "Signora Luna, as we sometimes call her, or, 'our lady with the bright eyes;' she is lady of honour to her majesty the queen, where, as one knows, night is turned into day; she will please you; she belongs to our very best acquaintance, and this evening, over and above, Signora Luna is at the full; shall I not immediately intro—"

"No! no! not this evening; Signora Luna is, at this moment, too splendid for me. Who is the tall gentleman who now talks with her? a stately figure also, but somewhat ostentatious."

"Respect! I pray for—Alexander the Great, or the Great Alexander—he has translated the logic and rhetoric of Aristotle; a most learned man, and the proper husband for the handsome Mrs. Luna."

"Humble servant! But my best one, here is the strangest company in the world—truly, not of this world. Signora Luna and Alexander the Great! I wonder what celestial dignitary will next have the honour—that officer, for example, I would gladly know his name; he talks now with a gentleman who wears an order; a delightful countenance; but he seems to me to belong a little to the earth."

"Not so entirely, for he belongs more to the sea. We call him 'the Viking'—for the rest he is called Commodore Captain Brenner, a very brave and distinguished man. Do you know with whom he speaks?"

"No, but I would willingly learn. Of a certainty he is called Aristides, or—Axel Oxenstjerna. Methinks I have seen him before."

"That is Baron Thorsten Lennartson: you will often see him here; he was Felix Delphin's guardian, and is now Flora's guardian."

"He is the same whom I fancied I knew again. You have given him no character-name, Selma; but I should like to give him one!"

"And what?"

"I would call him 'My lord,' because he seems as if he could be lord over himself; what say you!"

"You have said it excellently. It seems to me as if you had known him long."

"I have seen him years ago, and——but there stands a person beside Flora, whom, I think, I have seen also formerly; a regular, but marble-cold countenance; rather sallow, Voltaire-like features!"

"One of your relatives too! My and your brother-in-law, the Envoyé St. Orme; who only a few months ago came here from Paris."

"Virginia's husband! Ah, I ought to have recognised him but it is above ten years since I saw him, at Virginia's marriage. How beautiful she was! That she must so soon leave the earth! One year after her marriage!"

"Yes, on the anniversary of her wedding;" said Selma, with a voice that shewed a painful

remembrance. For this reason I continued my inquiries.

"And that young officer with whom you were dancing; a distinguished, handsome young man!"

"Another relation, Felix Delphin, Flora's brother. Is not Flora gloriously beautiful!"

"Very beautiful!"

"And how witty! how richly gifted! She has at least a dozen talents."

"That were almost too much!" said I, laughing; "and now, thanks my sweet Selma, that you have so richly entertained me. I now see a gentleman approaching you with dancing intentions, and you shall not any longer drive your partners to desperation on my account. Be easy about me; I amuse myself excellently with looking on the dance, and on the new, interesting acquaintance that I have made, Signora Luna, Alexander the Great, my Lord——."

"Bestow a glance on the philosopher," said Selma archly, and pointed to a servant in the livery of the family who approached with a tray of ices, and had a very grave countenance, with the features of a parrot.

"Take care, Jacob," continued she, merrily addressing him, "and look before you, that we do not waltz over you."

"O heaven defend me, Miss!" replied the philosopher with a rough voice, while a sudden illumination passed over his countenance, but which speedily resumed its dark expression, as he remained standing before me with his tray. 'Miss' floated away in the waltz, light as a breath.

Immediately after this, my stepmother came up to me with 'the rich old bachelor,' wearing the French order, and introduced 'your uncle, Chamberlain X.'

My uncle seated himself near me, and began the conversation with much politeness, which advanced from some compliments on myself to a tolerably witty criticism of others, but which had a less digestible relish in a spiritual sense.

Whether it were that I was wearied by the journey, or by the noise of the ball, or was spoiled by the conversation which I had already had, certain it is that this did not please me, and a sort of twilight mist spread itself before my eyes over that animated life which had just before been so brilliant. At the same time, I listened with pleasure to the praises of my stepmother. "A most excellent person," said my uncle, "I know no one in whom I have so great a confidence, no one on whom one can so much depend. When I would do a little good in secret, and would not wish it to be known, I always betake myself to her."

The Viking had left the company, after having, at going out, cast towards me a parting glance, which lived in my remembrance like a little point of light. Signora Luna's brilliant appearance vanished from our horizon, in order to ascend into the horizon of the Court, where she was at this moment in attendance. I only saw Selma when, between the dances, she came, with a friendly word or a question, bounding towards me: thus I saw her also now by the side of her mother, now by an elderly lady in the company, as if she would make all happy.

After supper, somewhat occurred, the impression of which I shall long retain. There arose a lively movement in the saloon, and I saw how my young sister was borne in an arm chair under the chandelier, whose light beamed around her, and the most animated vivat-cry resounded from the encircling gentlemen.

"My lord" was among those who thus exalted the young heroine of the festival, and right beautiful and princess-like sate she there, in the strong blaze of light, herself beaming with the charm of youth and becoming joy. An exclamation of admiration and homage went through the whole assembly. As my eyes sunk from the almost dazzling view, they were arrested by a countenance whose expression gave, as it were, a stab to my heart. It was the countenance of Flora. Vexation, envy, anger, lay in the almost spasmodic movements which thrilled through and disfigured the beautiful features—but only for a moment. As her eyes encountered mine, that expression changed itself again; and soon afterwards she laughed and joked with the Envoyé St. Orme, who was seldom from her side, and whose observant and cold glance had for me something repulsive.

As I now wished to sneak away from the company my stepmother shewed a determined resolution of accompanying me to my chamber; but, on my warm opposition, allowed herself to be persuaded to remain quietly, and not to let Selma, who was again engaged for a dance, observe anything.

When I returned to my chamber, I found it changed. The disorderly, lying-about articles of dress had vanished, and order, taste, and kind attention had set its stamp upon everything in this large and handsome room.

"The young lady herself has been up here, and has looked after every thing," said Karin, again supplying the fire which had burned low.

"Thanks, my young sister," said I in my heart.

I was fatigued and soon slept, but had disturbed dreams. All the people upon whom, in the course of the evening, my attention had been directed, I thought I saw arrange themselves in a quadrille with threatening gestures, and ready to pounce on one another. I found myself among them, and just on the point of—skirmishing with my stepmother. At one time floated past a sylph-like being, with glimmering wings, smiling lips, and enchanting zephyr-like movements, and danced between us, and wove us together with invisible but soft ribbons, and this sylph, this other Taglioni, was—Selma!

During this apparition, the tension of mind allayed itself; the bitterness ceased, the enemies made *chaine*, and I sank into a refreshing, sweet sleep, which let me forget the whole world, till the new morning awoke.

And now, whilst all is quiet in the house, and seems to repose from the dance, I will take a somewhat nearer view of my past and present circumstances.

I have passed through with my stepmother two entirely different periods. The first I will call.

THE PERIOD OF MY IDOLATRY.

At the age of eleven I saw my stepmother for the first time, and was so captivated that I adored her. This continued till my fifteenth year, when I was separated from her. But bit-

ter were my days in this time of my idolatry; because never could a golden idol have been more deaf and silent to the prayers of its worshippers, than was my stepmother to my love. Besides this, I was a violent child, and in my whole being the opposite of the lovely and the agreeable, which my stepmother so highly valued, and of which she unceasingly spoke in quotations from the romances of Madame Genlis. I was compared with the enchantresses in these romances, and set down in proportion. In one word my stepmother could not rightly endure me, and I could not endure—Madame Genlis and her graces, who occasioned me so much torment. Ah! the sunburnt, wild girl, grown up in the 'moors' of Finland, whose life had passed in woods and heaths, among rocks and streams, and amid dreams as wild and wonderful as the natural scenery among which she grew; this girl was in truth no being for the saloon, for a French Grace. Transplanted from the fresh wilderness of her childhood into the magnificent capital, where huge mirrors on every side reflected every movement, and seemed scornfully to mimic every free outbreak which was not stamped by grace,—she was afraid, afraid of herself, afraid of everybody, and especially of the goddess of the palace. The governess and the servants called me 'the Tartar-girl,' 'the young Tartar.' My stepmother was never severe towards me in her behaviour, but crushed me by her depreciatory compassion, by her cold repulsion; and I soon could not approach her without burning cheeks, and a heart so full, so swollen—if I may say so—with anxious sighs, that the tongue in vain sought for a word. To find any fault in my stepmother was what I never thought of. Every, every fault lay certainly in me; but ah! I knew not how I should behave in order to become different, in order to become agreeable to her. I know that at this time more than once I besought heaven on my knees, never to give me a lover, if it, on the contrary, would only give me the love of my mother. But heaven, deaf to my prayer, gave me a lover, but—not the love of my mother; and I must learn to do without it; which was made easier to me by my being removed from her, and transplanted into another sphere of life, and—where also I suffered, but in another way.

Five years afterwards I came again into my father's house, and passed some time there. This epoch, in relation to my former idol, may be called

THE EPOCH OF OPPOSITION;

for it was in many things opposed to the former. I had, after severe combat with life, and with myself, moulded myself to a stern and truth-loving being, who would see reality in everything, and who despised all that appeared to be gilded in life as miserable froth. French worldly morality, accomplishment, and grace, were an abomination to me, towards which I now assumed as perfectly a well-bred demeanour as my stepmother had formerly assumed towards my world of nature. The shining veil through which I had regarded her had now fallen off. I now saw faults in her, and saw them through a magnifying-glass. She pleased me still, but I loved her no longer.

I had fallen in love with the spirit of Thorild, had imbibed his love of truth and integrity, but at the same time somewhat also of his less pleasant way of showing them. And now clashed together Madame Genlis and Thorild, in the least pleasant manner, through my stepmother and me. For every quotation from Madame Genlis I had, always in warlike opposition, a quotation ready from Thorild, and my stepmother answered in the same spirit. Nevertheless, by degrees the French Marquese yielded to the Swedish philosopher; that is to say, she relinquished the field because such a rude fellow struck about him. It is to me a strange, half-melancholy remembrance, that my stepmother at this time was really afraid of me, and avoided me, evidently grieved by my unsparing earnestness. Several times also she endeavoured to govern and to overawe me; she would at times resume the sceptre, but in vain; it was broken in her hand: she saw this, and yielded silently and somewhat dispirited.

At the recollection of the harsh feeling I had at times, when I remarked this reaction in the relationship between us, I cannot preserve myself from a secret shudder; and would exclaim warningly to all over-severe parents, the counsel of the Apostle: "Parents, provoke not your children to anger!"

The fault was this time, for the most part, on my side. But I was embittered by the remembrance of that which I had suffered; and, besides this, to say nothing of Thorild, was unclear in my views of life, and unhappy in my soul; and this may obtain for me some excuse. My stepmother, a joyous, and pleasant, and much esteemed lady of the world, was entirely accustomed to the sunny side of life, and wished only to see this. I was more accustomed to the dark side, and thus we separated more and more.

One bond of union existed at this time between us; the little Selma, a weakly, but interesting child. She seemed, by I know not what incomprehensible sympathy, attracted to me; which yet, according to my Thorildish love of justice, did not at all accord with the reverence which was shown to her at home. But I could not help feeling myself drawn to her. She was her father's darling, and his chiefest occupation. He was a friend and pupil of the great Ehrensvärd, of the man with the severe and pure sense of beauty, and he wished to form of his daughter a being as harmonious and lovely as the ideal which he bore in himself; and not the eleven thousand heroines of modern scenes and novels, but the antique Antigone, so beautiful as woman, while she was so masculinely noble, was the prototype upon which he early directed the eye and heart of his daughter. Thus created he in her a new Antigone, and enjoyed through her a life which very weak health had rendered somewhat joyless. My stepmother was about this time very much occupied by her daughter Virginia, who by her beauty and her character might well flatter the pride of a mother. Admiration of her, and tenderness towards Selma, led us sometimes to an accordance of feeling.

We were again separated; and now that after ten years we are again come into contact, I am not without some uneasiness on account of our living together. Will it occasion a union,

or—a deeper separation? One of the two, that is quite certain; because my stepmother, just as little as myself, had stood still during her decennium. We both have lived to see sorrow. My stepmother has lost her husband and her beloved eldest daughter, and I, I have—— yet nevertheless, that is now over, and I—— am free.

That I am now better than when we last met, I will venture to hope. The philosophy which then made me so proud and so disputatious, has since then made me peaceable; THOUGHT has quietly and regulatingly laid its hand upon my brow; and life has cleared itself up, and the heart has calmed itself. Books have become my dearest companions; and observation, a friend which has accompanied me through life, and has led me to extract honey from all plants of life, even the bitter ones also. Thorild is still for me, as ever, a star of the first magnitude; but I no longer follow him blindly, and I have also become possessed of eyes for the constellation of Madame Genlis. In one thing will I always truly follow him—namely, in his doctrine, unceasingly to study and inquire after the good in all things.

On the shore where I was born, on the alder-fringed streams of Kautua, I often went, as a child, pearl-fishing, when the heat of the sun had abated the rigour of the water. I fancy still that the clear cool waves wash my feet; I fancy still that I see the pearl muscles which the waterfall had thrown together in heaps in the sand of the little green islands. Whole heaps of these muscles I collected together on the shore, and if I found one pearl among them—what joy! Often they were imperfect, half-formed, or injured; still sometimes I found right beautiful ones among them. Now will I again go out to fish for pearls, but in the stream of life.

The 2d of November.

I was yesterday morning interrupted by the messenger who called me to breakfast, and the messenger was my young sister, whose silvery clear voice asked at my door, "may one come in?" Yes, to be sure you may! besides, sylphs are not easily bolted out, and one opens willingly the door and heart, when a being like Selma desires to enter, and with benevolence and joy beaming from the diamond-bright eyes, bends before thee, and shews to thee tokens of friendship and kindly inclination. She was so charming, my young sister, in the flower of youth and life; in her simple, well-chosen, tasteful dress; and, above all, in her captivating manner, that I seemed to see in her the personification of the muse of Franzén, whose name she bears.

"God guard thee, thou lovely being!" thought I silently, as I observed her, and something like a painful foreboding brought tears into my eyes.

Not without a beating of the heart did I follow her down stairs, and prepare myself to see my stepmother and my home by daylight.

But my feeling of anxiety vanished as I entered the inner ante-room, and my stepmother met me with looks and words which seemed the expression of cordial good-will. Beyond this, every thing in the room was comfortable—atmosphere, furniture, to the inviting coffee service glittering with silver and real pearl.

"This is good indeed!" thought I.

Nothing here gave me greater pleasure than the sight of the collection of good oil-paintings which decorated the walls of the two ante-rooms. At the very moment when I was about to express my feelings on this subject, Flora entered. I scarcely recognised again the queen of the last night's ball. The delicate skin appeared coarse by daylight; the eye was dim; the dress negligent; and the beautiful countenance disfigured by an evident expression of ill temper. Selma, however, gains by being seen in daylight; her skin is delicate and fair; and her eyes have the most beautiful light, and the clearest glance, that I have ever seen in a human eye.

We seated ourselves to breakfast. We spoke of last evening's ball. My stepmother made on the occasion a little speech from the throne, which I had heard already in former times, but which had always somewhat embarrassed me. I was silent the while; but it excited in me a secret opposition, which I fancy my stepmother suspected; I know not otherwise why her glances were so often questioningly sent towards me. Selma's merry remarks interrupted the speech, and made us all laugh. Flora became again animated, and was witty and satirical. I put in my word also, and our gracious lady-mother appeared highly delighted. We brought into review various good acquaintance in last evening's ball; various toilets were criticised. In the mean time, Selma stared roguishly at my collar, and pronounced it somewhat 'rococo.' My stepmother looked at my dress, and pronounced this also somewhat 'rococo.' With that I started the idea, that my person itself might be somewhat 'rococo,' which was negatived with the greatest and the most courteous zeal.

My stepmother said I was exactly at the handsome, 'modern age,' for a charming woman; in one word, '*la femme la trente ans, la femme de Balzac*;' and added various things half unexpressed, but yet perfectly intelligible; as that I had grown handsomer, in my complexion, in my eyes, in my hands; and all this, to me, poor daughter of Eve, was a great happiness to hear.

Selma was resolute about taking my toilet in hand herself, in order to make 'this also' modern! I promised to submit myself to her tyranny.

After breakfast, my stepmother and I continued the conversation *tête-à-tête*; and I remarked during this that her countenance had considerably altered, and I saw a something uneasy and excited in her looks, which I had not seen before. Yet her features had not lost their noble beauty. While we talked, Selma watered her flowers, and sang thereto charmingly. The eyes of my stepmother turned often towards her, as if towards their light.

Flora was in a changeful humour. Now she opened a book, and now threw it from her; now she seated herself at the piano, and played something with good skill, but left off in the middle of the piece; now arranged her curls, and looked at herself in the mirror; at length she seated herself at the window; and made observations on the passers by. I called her secretly "Miss Caprice.'

Thus stood affairs in our ante-room, when, in a pause of the conversation, we heard a faint hissing whistling, and slow steps approaching the room where we sate.

My step mother cast an uneasy glance towards the door. Selma's song ceased, Flora looked quietly from the window, and upon—St. Orme, who entered the room. He and I were now formally introduced to each other. The repulsive impression which he had made upon me was not diminished by the shake of his hand. I receive an especial impression of the sort of person by the manner of taking the hand, and cannot avoid drawing deductions therefrom,—more however by instinct than by reason, since my reason refuses to be led by outward impressions, which may be merely accidental; but I cannot alter it: a cordial warm shake of the hand takes—my heart; a feeble or imperfect, or cold, one repels it. There are people who press the hand so that it is painful for a good while afterwards; there are also those who come with two fingers; from these defend us! . . .

But again to the Envoyé whose hand-shake, weak and sharp, although the hand was soft, did not please me. He went from me to Flora, whose hand he kissed; he wished then to put his arm confidentially round Selma's waist, but she escaped from him, and called to me to come and make acquaintance with her flower-bulbs, which she merrily introduced to me under the names of 'King Hiskia,' 'Lord Wellington,' 'Grand Vainqueur,' 'l'ami du cœur,' 'Diana,' 'Galatæa,' and so on:—flower-genii hidden in the bulbs, which we rejoiced to see unfolding in the winter sun.

We were here interrupted by Flora's brother, Felix Delphin, who gave to Selma a half-blown monthly rose. She took it blushing. Aha, my young sister! But I know not whether I shall bestow thee on the young Delphin. His remarkably handsome and good face has a certain unpleasant expression which tells of an irregular life.

The Envoyé said something softly to my stepmother which made her change colour, and with an uneasy look, rise up and go with him into her room.

I left the young merry trio employed in propositions and schemes for the pleasures of the day and of the week, and went up into my own room. It had a glorious prospect—my room, and afforded me an opportunity of observing, in a free and extended heaven, the play of light and shadow of clouds, and of azure blue, which gives so much life and animation to the firmament above our heads.

We dwelt upon the Blasieholm, exactly upon the limits of the fields planted with trees, where the Delagarde Palace, with its towers, had elevated itself for centuries, and had been burnt down in one night. I look out from my window, and see and hear the roaring of the broad stream which separates the city from Norrmalm, and on whose shores have been fought so many bloody battles; on the haven, the bridge of boats, the royal castle, with the Lion Hill; the river promenade, farther on, beneath the north-bridge; and on the other side of the island of the Holy Ghost, the blue water of the Mälar, and the southern mountains. From among the masses of houses upon the different islands, raise themselves the bold spires of the church-towers. To the left I have that of St. Catharine; to the right, that of St. James; and farther off, the royal gardens, with their rich alleys, and —— I should never come to an end, were I to name all that I have and govern—from my window. And in my chamber, I have my pencils, my books, and—myself.

The 5th.

I have looked about me in the family, at least as far as regards the outside of people. Because rightly to decide between minds, and to pass through the outward into the actual being, requires more time. My silent question addressed to every one for this purpose is, "What wilt thou, what seekest thou in life?" According to this rule, I botanize among human souls, and classify them.

"You must see Flora's paintings! You must hear Flora sing! You must see and hear Flora play in comedy! Flora must show you her poetical and prose descriptions and portraits! they are so witty, and so droll!" Thus I have often heard Selma say in these days; and she did not rest till I had seen and admired all—and I have admired it with great pleasure, for Flora's turn for the arts is in many ways distinguished. But greater still, I fear, is her self-love, or what do expressions like the following denote:

"I am not like common people; if I were like others, so and so, but I am really quite peculiar and remarkable, I cannot lower myself to the point of sight of these every-day figures," and more of the kind.

So seems with Flora the chief person to be an *I*, with Selma a *thou*. Yet I will not too hastily judge Flora.

Selma furnished me with a most agreeable morning yesterday, by allowing me to make acquaintance with several masterpieces in her beautiful collection of pictures. They were presents to her from her father, who collected them himselt during his residence in Italy. By the accurate knowledge of the spirit of the various colouring, by the pure and severe sense of beauty, one recognised the scholar of Ehrensvärd. In the mean time, the conversation turned to Selma's own residence in Rome. After Virginia's death, she accompanied her parents thither, who in this journey sought for the dissipation of their sorrow and an occasion of more highly accomplishing their beloved daughter. Here had Selma awakened to a consciousness of the beauty of life, but also to that of its pain, for here had she lost her adored father. Lennartson was then in Rome, had partaken with her happier days, and became in grief her support and consolation. With filial and brotherly tenderness he attached himself to the two mourning ladies, and conducted them, under his own faithful guard, back to their native land. Selma spoke with deep emotion of all that which he had been to them.

Towards evening came St. Orme and the young Delphin. St. Orme made Flora a present of a beautiful bracelet, over which she exhibited great delight, and allowed St. Orme himself to clasp it on her arm. After this, he held it forth and kissed it, and Flora—permitted it. Selma saw this with a disturbed look, and blushed.

We divided ourselves this evening into three

parties. Felix and Selma threw the feather-ball, and played comedy in the farthest ante-room, and their jests and her silver-ringing laughter came thence to us here; Flora allowed the firework of her wit to blaze before the Envoyé, who animated it by his satire, whilst he evidently ruled her and guided the conversation. which amused me, although I did not understand the frequent secret hints in it, and the vexation which these seemed sometimes to excite in Flora.

My stepmother permitted her lights to shine before me, and instructed me on the positions of the relationship in the State. I allowed myself to be edified, lent my two ears towards three sides, and made now and then one and another wise remark on my stepmother's views, as I with Sibylline solemnity laid my cards in order to read the book of fate. For I should be no worthy daughter of the home of the magic arts, Finland, if I had not been somewhat skilled in the prophetic-lore of coffee and cards. True it is that I never was an altogether worthy scholar of the celebrated soothsayeress, Liboria, who had taught me her art; and I have never yet laid the cards with her devotion and her spirit, but—— short and good, it amused me to see the play of fate in the cards, and I have often amused myself and others with it, and I did so also at this time.

When the evening was ended, the company separated; and Flora and I went through the little corridor towards our sleeping-rooms, which were separated by it; Flora remained standing, and said, as she suddenly turned herself toward me,

"You think certainly that I am in love with St. Orme."

"Hm?" answered I, "methinks it looks rather like it."

(For Flora this evening had really coquetted with St. Orme.)

"And know you not, wise Sibyl, that appearance often deceives? And so it is now. One must often appear that which one is not, in order to obtain that which one wishes. Craft and cunning were given to woman, in order to govern those who would rule her. They are her rightful weapons."

"So people often say," I replied, "but I have not found it so. I have found the force of truth and of earnestness—if they be used with prudence and love—alone right powerful, and that in men as in women."

"Truth and earnestness!" said Flora scornfully, "shew me where they can be found. We altogether cheat one another every day through life, however sanctifiedly we may conduct ourselves. How for example, is it with us two? Have we not for several days played off the most courteous cousins to each other, and yet I believe that at the bottom we think very lightly of one another. What is your opinion?"

"I think with you,' said I, animated by this candour.

"Well then!" continued Flora, "were it not quite as well that we openly assumed our position of hating one another?"

"Why not?" said I, as before, "that would be perhaps an entirely new way to love."

"Novelty pleases me," said Flora laughing too; "thus then, from this day, we are open enemies, and mutually cherish a little hatred. Is it not so, Miss Philosophia?"

"Agreed! Miss Caprice!"

We shook each other's hand laughing, and parted better friends than we had been before.

Notwithstanding Flora's words, I made up this evening, according to my unlooked-for conjectures, two matches, and united Flora and St. Orme, Selma and Felix. There was yet my stepmother and myself to provide for. Good, now! We will become the comfort of each other's age, and will govern the state together. Thorild and Madame Genlis can help us.

The 6th.

My unlooked-for conjectures are rendered vain; and by whom? By the Baron.

At breakfast, Flora and I declared in a lively way our agreement of the foregoing evening. My stepmother took the affair jestingly, as she would shew, and laughed at our 'hatred contract.' Selma looked on the affair, not as a merry one, but regarded us with grave and almost sorrowful eyes. I endeavoured to satisfy her by representing that I would shew her our hatred as a new way to friendship. She became again gay, and singing

> A little strift and brawl
> Injures not at all,

left us, in order to look after the domestic concerns. Soon after this came Baron Lennartson.

After some time of general conversation, he led Flora aside, and talked for a long time to her in a low voice. He seemed to beseech from her something earnestly, and during this seized, more than once, her hand. And Flora appeared not at all to oppose. I looked at my stepmother, and my stepmother looked at me.

"There seems to be quite a friendly understanding between guardian and ward," said I.

"Yes," replied my stepmother, "they are something more to each other than that."

"How! are they betrothed?"

"Yes! but it is not declared, and it will not yet be generally spoken of."

"Flora," continued I, "will next spring be of age, and will then have control over a considerable property."

"Merely over the income of it," said my stepmother; "over the capital her future husband alone will have control, according to the will of the uncle whom Flora and her brother have to thank for their property. He was a crabbed old man, and had no confidence in ladies' management of business. He ordered also that Flora should not marry before her five-and-twentieth year—which she completes in the spring—under the disadvantage of losing a considerable part of her property."

Selma entered. Lennartson ended his discourse with Flora, and went, after he had kissed her hand, and had said, slowly and emphatically,

"Think on it!"

"There was indeed a very warm conversation," said my stepmother somewhat inquiringly to Flora, as she, after a glance at the mirror, approached us with beaming eyes.

"Yes," said Flora, "he is as kind as he is excellent; one must do everything that he wills."

I sighed aloud.

"Now, why does Sophia sigh so?" inquired Flora.

"Because I conjecture that you will be right happy soon with Lennartson, and receive his hand. I must indeed nourish my hatred."

"O," said Flora, laughing, "do not mourn yet. It will not be so good with me," added she, half melancholy. "The talk is now less about me than about Felix. My guardian wishes that I should be for him a prototype, and an example, and a guide—but my influence upon my dear brother is not much to be boasted of; and I well know who, better than I, could work upon him, and could change my dear Felix into a true bird, 'a phœnix,' if she would. What do you think, Selma?"

Selma turned herself away, and said, half to herself, "Do not let us talk of it."

"Well, then, let us talk of my masquerade costume," replied Flora with liveliness; "come and help me to choose the colours; you have so good a taste." She took Selma by the arm, and the two young cousins chasséed, singing, out of the room.

"Later, as I went with a message to Selma, in Flora's room, I found them in eager discourse, amid gold and silver gauze.

"But Flora, that is too dear!" said Selma,

"But it is so divinely beautiful!" said Flora.

"But it may still be beautiful—and the difference in the cost is so considerable! You have indeed promised Lennartson himself to be an example to Felix."

"Yes, yes, in generals, but not in all trifles. In them I will follow my own head. So look Selma dear, do not assume airs of wisdom to me; they do not become you—be a little bit livelier. Let us come to my turban. Ah, aunt! That was divine! My aunt shall say"——and Flora turned herself warmly to my stepmother, who just then entered, and now without hesitation entered in Flora's plans respecting the expensive costume which should change her into a Circassian.

After this she said to me, whilst she embraced Selma, "What think you of this child here, Sophia, who will sit at home by her old mother, instead of going to the masquerade at W.'s?"

"I love her on that account," said I.

"How should Miss Philosophia do otherwise, towards such behaviour?" said Flora, somewhat pointedly.

"But if I," continued my stepmother, her eyes twinkling with delight, "take upon myself all cost of the dress, and——"

"That mamma should not do, if mamma loves me," exclaimed Selma. "It is really so, that I have no desire for this ball, and still less to ruin myself for it. My mother, beside, would merely go there on my account, and——one thing with another, I am convinced that I shall be far more pleased if I remain at home this evening."

"Now you wish to win Lennartson's heart;" said Flora, bitterly.

"Flora!" cried Selma, with a look of astonishment and wounded innocence. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Pardon!" besought Flora, and kissed her burning cheek. "I did not mean what I said. That which I really mean is, you deserve him far more than I do."

We now, every one of us, got very deep into dresses and costumes.

The 9th.

Selma has altered my wardrobe, and has tyrannized me to become modern. And I have let myself be tyrannized over, because I see that it gives her and my stepmother so much pleasure. And my stepmother! she has embarrassed me with her beautiful presents. But she had such evident pleasure in giving, that I could not do otherwise than receive with gratitude.

To-day, in childish pleasure over my mid-day toilet, Selma exclaimed,

"Ah! I would that Balsac saw you. He would directly bring you into a novel, and let you awaken at least three deadly passions."

"That may be said I," "a strong proof of the power of poetical fancy, since, in reality, I should not indeed awaken one passion."

"Um, um, um!" said my stepmother with a courteously-designed diplomatic mien."

"Neither do I wish it any more," continued I;

> The times of folly are gone forever
> The days of wisdom are at hand.

"A wisdom," said Flora, "which perhaps smacks a little of the wisdom of the fox under the grapes. I, for my part, never believe that a lady does not wish to please and win hearts, and incense and sacrifice, be she called Cleopatra, or Ninon, or St. Philosophia."

"St. Philosophia may sometime teach you otherwise," answered I seriously; and my stepmother, who at times seems somewhat afraid that the hatred between Flora and me might become earnest, hastened to turn the conversation by dinner, during which the merry jests of Selma put all in good humour. Flora and I said many amusing things about our 'hatred-contract,' and added many clauses and paragraphs. My stepmother scattered over them laughter and joke. From what I see, I suspect that we are a set of clever people here together, and can make merry with one another.

The 12th.

Our every-day life begins to assume more and more shape before my eyes. A deal of dissipation reigns here, and I am glad that I am withdrawn from this to my own solitary chamber. The two young girls sport away their lives, but with very dissimilar grace.

Flora has perpetually changing, and for the most part, vexatious, tempers. The least adverse occurrence brings on a storm. Selma, on the contrary, has a golden temper; her whole being is harmony, and one sees this in her light graceful gait; one hears it in the joyous singing which announces her approach or her presence, here and there in the house; while she now occupies herself in the domestic concerns, now keeps a sort of dancing attendance by my mother, now takes part in all Flora's revolutions, or now cares for the strangers who daily visit the house. The domestics obey her with joy, because she always speaks kindly to them, and her arrangements evince a good and wise understanding. The Philosopher himself glows at the sight of her. In one word, she is the life and sunshine of the house. The only thing that disturbs me in her is an often-protruding too satirical humour, which at times—shall I say it—degenerates into malice! The word is severe, but I think that it is true. But with such gay animal spirits as Selma and Flora

have for their daily companions, it is not easy to maintain here also the right tact and the right harmony. And then the pleasure which my stepmother has in everything that awakens life and spices it, and her love to the young girls, makes her often not observe that they scatter about cayenne pepper instead of harmless salt.

Between me and my stepmother much politeness prevails,—although no confidence. I fancy that we are rather afraid of each other. We have commonly an hour's *tête-à-tête* each day, in which we together care for the affairs of the state, and make our '*reflexions chrétiennes et morales*,' on the course of time and things. In these, and in all our politenesses, I remark that we secretly strive to enlighten and to convert one another, and even as with our profound words and views to startle one another. Thus it happens, that while we are trying to set together the state-machine, it sometimes, between us two, is near going a little to pieces. For, although we both of us maintain that we stand in the most exact '*juste milieu*' of heavenly right; still my stepmother leans considerably to the aristocratic side of the state, just as I towards the democratic. My stepmother, who in her former importance as wife of the District-Governor exercised no inconsiderable influence upon the affairs of the government, conceives herself to have not only all the knowledge of experience, but also the skill of a ruler. I, on the contrary, conceive that from my philosophical point of vision, I see everything and understand rather better; and all this occasions at times a little strife between us, which, however, never becomes violent. Because when my stepmother raises her voice with a 'believe my, friend,' —I am silent, and amuse myself by assuming a disbelieving air; and although I also put myself in opposition, I still let my stepmother always have the last word or tone, namely, the diplomatic 'Um, um, um!'

In the evening the family, however, is mostly at home (they say that in the New-Year this will be different); and Felix Delphin, St. Orme, and Lennartson often join it. I see plainly that the Baron has directed an inquiring glance upon Flora and St. Orme. It seems to me often that his eyes turn from the brilliant effect-seeking Flora to Selma, and rest upon her with a certain tender observation; and she—why are her eyes in his presence so continually shaded by the long dark eyelashes? Why hears one nothing of the gay sallies, of the sagacious and fine observations, which otherwise are peculiar to her? Yet Flora would of a truth not endure that. I have seen this in one and another pointed jealous glance which has flashed from Flora's eyes. But I also have received my share in this glance when Lennartson gives me any considerable portion of his attention, which, I say it with pleasure, not seldom happens.

The Baron—no! No description of him. Bulwer, who has thrown so many deep glances into the nobler class of the female mind, observes with justice, how indifferent to them is the beauty or plainness of a man. It is the impression of the character in demeanour, gestures, and words, which fetter or repel. Thus, not a word about the Baron's height, size, hair, teeth, and so on. Neither should I have much to say on the subject; but I know this, that the impression of his personal appearance is such that one does not forget it, and never will. One feels, as it were, exalted by it, and his look—yes, of that I must say one word.

There are eyes, in which one looks as it were into a brightened world,—so must the eyes of Schelling be, and therefore I wish for once, to be able to look into them;—there is also a look which I call especially the look of the statesman. Some one has said, "philosophers see more light than shapes;" and I say "most others see more shapes than light;" but the true statesman sees at the same time the shapes of life, and sees them in the true light of life. His glance is at the same time bright and distinct. Such is Lennartson's glance, and one sees soon that sun as well as lightning can speak from it.

I am glad to have seen and known this man.

St. Orme makes beside him a decided contrast, although he also has a distinguished exterior, and is rich in knowledge, wit, and experience of life. But he wants a something in his being, a something which ennobles the whole. He inspires no confidence, no esteem. Besides this, he has a certain uneasy activity in his arms and fingers, which reminds one of a spindle, and makes him—at least to me, disagreeable.

How should I understand the way in which Flora acts towards these two men? It seems to me certain that she loves the Baron; but why then coquet with St. Orme? Why accept presents from him?

A guest, who also begins to present himself here more frequently is, 'the rich old bachelor,' my uncle. He is tolerably agreeable and entertaining; and if I might not fear being proud, I might believe that his visits had reference to—me.

He sees in me perhaps a '*passable souper*.' My stepmother begins to give me one and another well-meant little hint on the subject; I pretend that I understand nothing about it.

Among the frequent guests here are the two sisters von P., Mrs. and Miss, commonly called here the Lady Councillors of Commerce, who drive an important trade in the city with the phrases 'they said,' 'they think,' 'they know.' To us this is somewhat ridiculous; but yet we are no despisers of the commerce which we laugh at, for both sisters know a vast many people, and the unmarried lady is a wide-awake person, whose great, peering eyes see very sharply and correctly, and whose tongue is more amusing than keen. She has above ninety cousins; all on the side of the ladies, as she told us the other day.

The 14th.

Yesterday evening I made the acquaintance of 'our nearest,' as Selma calls the circle of the most trusted friends of the house, in contradistinction to 'our remotest.' When I, as usual, towards half-past seven, came down into the room of my step-mother, I saw Signora Luna sitting in one corner of the sofa, but evidently in the wane, as Selma also whispered when she introduced me to her. The beautiful Countess saluted me somewhat coolly, yet I was pleased with the pressure of her warm, silky-soft hand.

The rest of the company consisted of Baron Alexander G——, a young lieutenant, Ake Sparrsköld; a sister of Flora's, a widow, and

ten years older than herself; the Baroness Bella P., whom we call 'the Beauty,' and whose features are of the first class, but in expression only of the second; of the handsome old lady Mrs. Rittersvärd, and her daughter Helfrid; and of St. Orme and Lennartson.

They spoke of a now greatly-admired French romance which St. Orme had lent to Flora. St Orme extolled the strength of the characters, and the boldness and pomp of its colouring. The young Sparrsköld considered the last to be false; and in the first he found an exaggeration which robbed them of all strength. Every human effort immediately mounts up to insanity, and loses as well proportion as design; even virtue cannot appear sublime, without being placed on stilts and becoming unnatural. And the object of the actions! Always merely single, contracted motive, always self, selfish, isolated happiness; never an endeavour, an interest, which embraces the great interests of humanity. And these faults he believed were to be found in the whole of the new French literature.

Lennartson agreed warmly in this; "and the aim of this literature," said he, "is not merely false in itself. They are untrue as chronometers, and libel the nobler and one may say the UNIVERSAL SPIRIT of the times—the spirit which places individual efforts and individual well-being in the most complete connexion with the universal good. In regard to this feeling towards the UNIVERSAL, towards the WHOLE, the present young France might go to the school of the old Rousseau. With all their faults, still his romances are, to a great degree, patterns for pictures of this kind of citizen social life. See how here the single individuals represent the chief varieties of mankind; and how, when they embrace one another in love, this love stiffens not into egotism, but expands itself, in order to embrace the most sacred institutions of the citizen social life, the life of humanity and of nature in its divine existence, and domestic life steps forth, as it must do, as the point from which the great life of the world will be sanctified and blessed."

St. Orme shrugged his shoulders. "Poor Rousseau! With all his ideal romances he was merely—a fanatic!" said he, and went to join Baron Alexander in the great ante-room.

"I feel that you have right on your side," said I to Lennartson, "but—still I would so willingly see the progress in every important formation of harmony—see an actual advance forward, a step upon the path of development—and it cannot be denied that this French literature presents characters and situations of a variety and depth such as the world has never before seen; it presses into every corner of social existence—its every moment of suffering, darkness, and dissonance: this is probably only a descent into hell, but—must not an ascent into heaven be near; a change in which night's deepest night shall be illumined by its most beautiful morning? Is it indeed possible that the highest point of this literature shall be only—a return to Rousseau?"

"Yes," replied Lennartson, smiling at my zeal, "but as I just observed, merely as concerns the looking to, the feeling FOR THE WHOLE, the universal. I see, like you, in this literature, a decided new development, and it is not the first time that the people who exhibited this have broken up new paths for the world. But it is yet merely fragmentary; it contains studies for a great composition. And some day certainly will the master step forward who will arrange these chaotic creations into a harmonious world. Yet—perhaps, the model for this must first of all present itself in actual life."

"How do you mean?" asked I, excited.

"Permit me," continued Lennartson, "to direct your attention to the principal feature in the better, beautiful literature of our time—namely, to its tendency,—that of presenting woman as the point in life from which animating, renovating strength proceeds. And I confess that I accord with it. I expect at this period of the world much—from woman."

That the female auditorium, before whom the Baron spoke these words, looked up to him with pleasure and acknowledgment, was merely natural. A modest joy glowed in Selma's beautiful eyes, whilst from the flashing eyes of Flora broke forth something which I might call—great.

My stepmother now made the move that we should go into the saloon and hear some music. We followed her.

Flora called Lennartson to the piano, and sung and played bewitchingly for him; at intervals they talked in a low voice.

I attached myself to Helfrid Rittersvärd and Lieutenant Sparrsköld, who, with his honest countenance and his frank way of acting and speaking, pleased me particularly. 'The Beauty' joined herself to us, and seemed to wish to make a deathless impression upon Ake Sparrsköld, but he seemed for the present, like myself, to be more taken with Miss Rittersvärd.

When I see a young lady who is as ugly as Miss Helfrid Rittersvärd, and at the same time has so tranquil a manner, and has so pleasing and happy a way of acting and speaking, I form a very high opinion of her. I feel that some way a high consciousness exalts her above all the petty miseries of weakness; she has a full confidence in the noble within herself and in her fellow-beings, and calls forth thereby their esteem and every sound feeling, which easily vanquishes all outward troubles. I found Helfrid's conversation spiced and animating, and I fancy that Sparrsköld found it so too, although 'the Beauty' exercised upon him certainly her power of attraction.

My stepmother played piquet with her good friend Mrs. Rittersvärd. This amiable old lady suffered from a nervous affection of the head, and is come to Stockholm in order to consult the physicians there on the subject. Her daughter obtains the means needful for this by her translations of foreign works, and also assists thereby in providing for two younger brothers. Well deserves she the name in earnest of "Miss Estimable," which Flora gives to her half in jest.

Selma was here and there in the company, and took a friendly part in every thing that went forward.

St. Orme played cards with the Baron Alexander and Felix Delphin, but he threw often from his cards sharp glances upon Flora and Lennartson, who, at the piano, had forgotten

the music for a low but warm conversation. This was suddenly interrupted by St. Orme, who exclaimed—

"Flora! my best Flora! bestow upon me one quarter of a thought. I am to-night an unlucky player; come to my help with a piece of good advice. Tell me in which colour shall I play. . . . In black or red?"

"In black," answered Flora.

"In black!" repeated St. Orme, "why do you not rather council me in red? Red is your favourite colour—crimson *red*—is it not? or do I remember erroneously?"

"I do not remember!" said Flora, with apparent indifference, as she rose, and a crimson glowed upon her cheeks.

"But I remember it, I!" returned St. Orme. "Crimson is your colour, and therefore—gentlemen! Six in hearts. This game I hope to win," continued he, nodding to Flora, who suddenly went out. She soon returned; but her joyous mood was gone, and her cheerfulness for the remainder of the evening was constrained.

As St. Orme went away, I heard him say to Flora half offensively, "Thanks for your council, dear cousin! I won my game! and with your colour upon my heart, I hope to win it also in the future."

"Do not make yourself sure of it!" said Flora, out of humour.

"Defy me not!" said St. Orme, slowly, half in jest, but with warning earnestness; and he seized her resisting hand and kissed it, and bowed smiling to her.

What may that portend?

The 16th.

I went out to-day far and alone, and enjoyed myself with my own thoughts. Returned home, I found visitors, and among them the Chamberlain. I saw certain strange telegraphic signs between my stepmother and him.

Flora lives only in her costume, and in her thoughts of the ball at Minister —— What weariness for—an evening!

Many projects for balls and other pleasures, I, for my part, say 'No!' to all of them. I say that I am too old to dance.

"Um, um, um!" says, politely negatively, my stepmother.

I think, however, of being present at the New-Year's assembly, because I there shall see the royal family more nearly.

The 17th.

Noble flowers have nectaries, honey-containers, in which the noblest juices of the plant are preserved. But in order to come at these, one must sometimes—if one has not the genius of a bee, or of Hummel, but has merely unskilful human fingers—one must sometimes wound the flower. The human soul has also its nectaries, which we must often handle as we do the flowers.

The occasion for these reflections is the following:—I found Selma and Flora, as well as my stepmother, occupied by reviewing the acquaintance and friends of the house. They made sharp work of it, and most of them were treated without mercy or forbearance.

Flora was the severest, but Selma soon followed her footsteps. My stepmother laughed a deal at this mimicry and these caricatures of the young girls. I also began to laugh, for the satire was strikingly witty; but when a couple of good, estimable people, and whom the young girls liked with their whole hearts, were handled quite remorselessly, I felt myself wounded, and was troubled at all the poison which these young human flowers, as it were, breathed forth.

I made use of a moment, when my stepmother was out of the room, to tell them, affectionately, how deeply I felt this.

Both blushed; and Flora said, "I could very well see by your silence that you were thinking about reading us this lesson. But my best Philosophia, if you will preach, do it in a Finland church, but not in the saloons of Stockholm, where you will convert nobody. It is here as everywhere in the great world, '*tous les genres sont bons, hors le genre ennuyeux.*' Besides this, when people are young they must amuse themselves and laugh. It is time enough to be grave and silent when the years of wisdom come. And when we shall be old maids, then we shall be, perhaps, as moral and virtuous as you."

I was silent; for what was the use of replying to anything like this? and when my stepmother came in I went out softly, and up to my own room. I was inwardly uneasy. Selma is not that which I fancied, thought I, and looked up to the beaming stars, which, in the evening twilight, began to step forth from the deep blue, and thought of the stars which I had seen beaming in her eyes, and mourned sincerely over their dimming.

But I had not been long alone, when I heard light footsteps springing up-stairs. My door opened and — Selma threw herself into my arms, and said—

"Are you very indignant against me?"

"No longer, now, my sweet Selma!" said I, affected by her heartfelt manner.

"But you have been indignant, you have been dissatisfied with me, and that certainly more than once. Is it not so?"

I assented. I told her how I feared that Flora might mislead her to an unworthy passion for censure and severity, and how it grieved me to see dark specks in her soul. I spoke earnestly of that blameable sharpsightedness to little things, which blinded the mind to what was great and conciliatory; of the disposition of mind which led us to depreciate others in order to exalt ourselves. I became severer than I had wished to be, and pronounced this judgment to be self-righteousness and phariseeism. Selma listened to me in silence, and became more and more grave and pale.

"You are right!" at length she said; "you are certainly quite right. Ah! I have reflected so little upon myself; till now I have given so little heed to myself.——Everybody has been so kind to me, has, in fact, spoiled me. But do you tell me of my faults, Sophia! I will alter, I will improve myself!"

"But you must not weep, Selma."

"And what matters it if I weep? Tears truly must wash away the hateful spots from my soul. Be not afraid for me, and spare me not, Sophia. Tell me always the truth, as long as you consider me worthy of hearing it."

I embraced the affectionate girl warmly, and told her how happy she made me.

We talked now calmly of the difficulties of a true middle-path along the field of social criticism. I agreed as to the difficulty of finding it; and that although I watched over myself, I had often to reproach myself with sins of the tongue. An affectionate tone of mind, which regarded more the intrinsic than the accidental in man, would be the safest guide to this. And for the rest, the more experienced, and the more prudent we were, should we, all the more, find better subjects for our sharp-sightedness than the short-comings of our neighbours.

"You speak of something," said Selma, "which I for some time have dimly felt. Since the death of my father and teacher, I am, I fear, gone back in many things. I know not how it is now; but my days are trifled away in nothing. I often feel an emptiness—I fear that I have sunk. Ah! thank you, Sophia, that you have awoke me to it. But help me now again into a good way. Help me to occupy myself with that which makes wiser and better. You are indeed my elder sister! Be now also my friend!"

How willingly will I be so. We now projected together a new arrangement of life; we laid our plans for the future, and continued our conversation long, by which I was permitted to see a soul which is capable of the noblest perfection.

That which had begun so gravely ended, however, jocosely; inasmuch as I promised, as an equivalent for Selma's instruction in singing and Italian, to teach her Finnish; she promised in return to exercise my patience severely, because she never would understand Finnish.

When Selma had left me at the call of her mother, I felt that I loved her, and that truly for the whole of my life. Never, never shall I forget how she stood before me, and said,

"What matters it if I weep? Tell me always the truth; I will alter, I will improve myself." And the quiet tears in the noble, soul-beaming countenance—I wish that Lennartson had seen and heard her. Oh, there are still beautiful things on earth!

The 19th.

Selma was right in her prophesying. The masquerade evening was to us home-tarriers a far pleasanter evening than if we had figured in the most magnificent parts.

Whilst Selma gave the finishing hand to Flora's toilet, I went down to my stepmother, and found Felix, the Viking, and the Baron, with her.

The latter was very little talkative, and often turned his eyes towards the door.

When Flora, attended by Selma, entered in her magnificent costume, he seemed struck by her beauty. I was to that degree, that I could not withhold an exclamation of surprise and rapture. We were all carried away; and Selma's beaming eyes went beseechingly around in order to collect honour and incense for the beautiful Circassian, who stood there in proud consciousness of her youth, her beauty, and her splendour. Lennartson's admiration, however, quickly cooled; his glance became serious; and when St. Orme entered in an ornamental Turkish dress—he and Flora were to dance together in a quadrille—he suddenly vanished, without taking leave of any one.

Flora's countenance plainly showed an expression of disquiet; but it soon vanished, and she smiled with pleasure as the Envoyé, with well-selected oriental compliments, conducted her to the carriage, where her sister awaited her, in order to drive her to the ball. The Viking remained with us, and so did Felix, although he was to have been at the masquerade.

We spoke of Baron Lennartson: and I expressed my delight in the strong feeling for the worth of woman and for her usefulness, which he had acknowledged a few evenings before. The Viking said—There is no one who thinks more highly of woman; and no one also who is severer in his requirings from her than he. The admiration and love which his mother inspired him with, seem to have laid the foundation of this.

My questions drew forth many relations of the childhood and youth of the Baron, which I have collected together in the following picture.

Lennartson's father, General Lennartson, was a man of violent temper and dissolute life. All care for the children and their education devolved upon the mother; a noble, highly accomplished lady, but of feeble health.

The eldest son, our Lennartson, was in his youth of a delicate constitution and irritable temperament. The mother dedicated to him the greatest attention; not an effeminating, but a tenderly cherishing care, which makes strong in love. By the bed of the boy the quiet mother often sat, and related to him, or read aloud of men who have overcome the infirmities of the body by the strength of the soul and the will, and who have become the glory and benefactors of their nation. Especially dwelt she upon the great men of his fatherland; those strong-minded and pious men, who by the union of those qualities, laid the foundation of the character of the Swedish people when this is true to itself.

The boy listened inquisitively; his breast opened itself to great thoughts; and the soul, nourished by the marrow of heroism, soon raised up the weaker body. This also was strengthened by useful exercises. At the age of fifteen, Lennartson excelled the greater number of his companions in pliancy and strength of body. The mother soon saw the affectionate spirit of her son break forth in its whole wealth, but with its dangerous propensities likewise. The young Lennartson had, like his father, a violent and inflexible temper. His father's severity towards his mother, excited him in the highest degree; and this gave occasion to scenes between father and son which unsettled the weak health of the mother, but—strange enough—broke also the rude power of the father. He became, as it were, afraid of his son; afraid, at least, in all things which concerned the mother, and he no longer dared to offend against her. This St. John like nature had brought up an eagle; and this eagle now spread its wings defendingly over her. Happy in the love of her son, but terrified also at the almost fearful temper which she saw break forth in him, she wished to teach this young power to govern itself; and sought to strengthen him in that which alone gives all power its truth, its proportion,

and its right direction; namely, in the true fear of God. Early had she permitted the great figures of humanity to step forward before the eye of the child. Now she endeavoured to let the inquiring understanding of the young man ascend to a clear conception of the reality of life, and of the doctrine which had cradled in unconscious love the heart of the child. For this end she went to work in quite another way to most parents and teachers. Instead of removing books, which are looked upon as dangerous to piety, she brought these forward. She read with her young son the works of the most renowned atheists and deists, from the oldest times to the present day, and let his reason exercise itself with comparing their doctrines with the doctrine in which a personally revealed God gives most complete solution of the enigma of life, as well as in this revelation of His will and His being, the only secure, fully-efficient guarantee for the fulfilment of man's deepest longing, his holiest hope on earth.

She let him in this way surround himself with perfect difficulties, and, as it were by his own strength, open the way to the innermost centre of life. She it was who brought forward objections founded upon the doctrines of the Naturalists; he it was who answered them. But the joy which beamed from the eyes of the mother at the happily solved difficulties, probably enlightened the son secretly in his inquirings.

And whilst she thus conducted him to an independent and firm point of mind, she taught him to have esteem for his opponent, and to value all honest inquiry and all sincere opinion, and to acknowledge the sproutings of truth even in immature doctrines.

Lennartson often spoke of this period of his life, as of the happiest and richest. His mother's affectionate glance and approving word were his dearest reward. She caressed him but very rarely, although he often fell upon his knees before her in fanatical reverence, and kissed her and her dress. Only sometimes at those moments, in which she remarked that the young heart was too violently consumed by a desire for reciprocation, did she allow his glowing cheek to repose on the breast which only beat for him, but which already bore the seed of death in a cruel and generally incurable malady.

Carefully concealed she from her son the pangs by which she had been wasted for many years. For the first time, when an operation was necessary, Lennartson became aware of the sufferings and the danger of his mother. She wished him to be absent during the painful hours, and sought by an innocent guile to deceive him as to the time. But he allowed himself not to be deceived; he allowed himself not to be sent away. His arms sustained her in the painful hour; her eyes rested during it upon his, and for his sake she bore all without the slightest complaint.

And she was able to live yet three years for his sake; yet three years to be happy through him. Then broke out the malady incurably. Whilst she spoke of immortality and of the certainty of seeing him again, and besought of him to have 'patience with his father,' she departed in his arms.

The effect of this loss upon the youth of eighteen was terrible, and matured him early to manhood. His tone of mind at this time, and his love to the studies in which he had early found such pleasure, determined him secretly to enter the clerical profession, and his studies at the University, like the studies of the greatest statesman of Sweden especially—were theological. In these studies he was—also like Axel Oxenstjerna—interrupted, in order, according to the will of his father, that he should travel abroad. As Secretary to the Swedish embassy, he travelled to Vienna.

The success which he had here, and the talents which he exhibited, determined, according to the wishes of his father, his future destiny; and he has now shown, on the path of the statesman, that he deserves all esteem and confidence.

After my stepmother and the Vicking had alternately given this account of Lennartson's life, Selma reminded me, that the first evening I had seen him here, I had said that I had many years before already made his acquaintance, and I must now relate how and where; which I did in the following manner:

It is now about fifteen years ago, when I found myself at a dinner-party, at which were present General Lennartson and his son. The company was large, and consisted for the most part of the connexions and acquaintances of the General. Merely a corner of the table separated me from young Lennartson. The distinguished young man was good enough to busy himself about me, at that time a bashful girl of fourteen, and related to me Schiller's Wallenstein, and I forgot over this both eating and drinking. During the meal-time, the general conversation was of a disturbance which had taken place in the military academy, and they mentioned a young man who was at the head of it, who had made himself amenable for several uproars, and in consequence thereof was expelled. Some of the guests gave the young man very hard names, called him 'gallow's bird,' and so on.

The young Lennartson undertook alone the defence of the young man, and did it with warmth; he shewed how, in this last instance, he had been provoked by words into the existing quarrel, and how even his errors bore traces of a noble heart. The General took up the affair against his son, and became ever more violent against the accused. Young Lennartson continued to defend him too even against his father, with respect, but with great determination. All at once the General became, as it were, insane, and turned himself personally against his son, with an outburst of rudeness and the most violent accusations.

From that moment, in which the father's attack was directed against himself, the son became wholly silent. It is true that his cheeks and his lips became somewhat paler; but his look upon his father was so firm, his whole bearing was so calm, that one might almost have believed that he was almost insensible to his father's unworthy behaviour. Whilst all looks, with a kind of anxiety, passed to and fro between father and son, mine dwelt with a feeling of admiration upon the noble countenance of the latter. Involuntarily they riveted themselves upon a small gleaming speck upon the white, youthful, polished forehead, which be-

came large and more shining, and at length rolled down a clear sweat-drop, to conceal itself in the dark eyebrow. This was all which betrayed the struggle within himself. The General at length paused for the want of words and breath, and for a moment it was as still as death at the table. The young Lennartson was as still as the rest; no affectation of indifference or defiance disfigured his beauty. He seemed to me on account of his perfect self-government to be worthy of admiration, and many seemed to share this impression with me. All, however, seemed desirous by general conversation to throw off the painful excitement. The young Lennartson also took part in it without constraint, but he was more grave than before —the end of Wallenstein I did not hear.

"Do you remember," inquired the Vicking from me, "the name of the young man whose great deeds gave occasion to this scene?"

"No! the name I have forgotten, or else did not hear. But I mentioned some facts which I remembered in that history, and which represented him as a restless and powerful character."

"And that then was the first thing which you heard about *us*!" said the Viking softly, but emphatically.

I looked at him in surprise; his eyes were directed to me with a troubled earnestness; and I read in them such dark remembrances, that I quickly withdrew mine, vexed and almost full of remorse for having awakened them.

My stepmother remarked significantly, "Lennartson is in truth a rare character, and I wish that all young men would take him for example."

"Yes! who does not wish to resemble him?" exclaimed Felix Delphin, who seemed to draw the moral to himself. "Ah! if he were only—how shall I say it?—a little less superior. But he stands so high, that one hardly dare look up to him. He is—too free from faults."

"Without faults Lennartson is not, just as little as any other mortal," said Brenner, "but they are such faults as belong to great natures. In the meantime they prevent him from being happy."

"Is he not happy?" exclaimed Selma, and looked up with a troubled and astonished glance.

"He is not happy," said Brenner, "because he is so seldom satisfied with himself. He has an insatiable thirst which consumes him."

"And what thirst?" asked I.

"The thirst after perfection."

We were all silent a moment. Brenner's word and tone had awakened something great within us. At length said Felix,—

"It is precisely this greatness in him which bows down and humiliates natures less gifted. He overawes more than he exalts. For my part, I confess that I at the same time admire him and—fear him."

"And yet, Felix," said Selma, "you know that he is very kind."

"Yes, when I deserve it, Selma! And see, there it is. I do not often deserve it, and then —Ah! how often, when I was with him, when I heard him, when I saw him act, I have despised myself for this reason, that I was so unlike him! And I have then made the best resolutions. But when I come out again into the world, then I forget myself and him, and do as other fools do, and then—I am afraid of him—of his look, because he is one with my conscience, and—condemns me."

Selma extended her hand to her cousin, and looked at him with bright, tearful eyes. Young Delphin was evidently affected, seized the offered hand, kissed it vehemently many times, and hastened away.

It is impossible that Selma can be indifferent towards this amiable young man! Soon afterwards the Viking left us also, with his gloomy thoughts.

When we were alone, my stepmother gave me the following description of the former circumstances of the Viking.

Vilhelm Brenner, in his childhood, was remarkable for his good heart and his unquiet head. In the military academy he was universally beloved, at the same time that his pranks and his disorderly conduct involved him in quarrels, and drew upon him many annoyances. He was without stability, and was impelled by the suggestions of the moment. Various acts of insubordination drew upon him the severity of the law; this he met with obstinacy and defiance, and was in the end expelled from Carlberg. His connexions, provoked by his behaviour, received him with a sternness and depreciation which completely irritated the passionate soul of Brenner. He looked upon himself as dishonoured by the whole world; saw the future closed before him; and, in order to deaden his despair, plunged into still wider disorders than before. When he had run through all that he possessed, and saw himself in debt beyond his power of payment, he turned his destructive hand against his own life. But a preventing hand was laid upon his, and he was withheld from the brink of the abyss; and he who withheld him was Thorsten Lennartson. He caused light to ascend into the darkened soul of Brenner. He shewed to him the future yet open; he let him feel that he had his own fate yet in his hands; that he might again obtain the esteem of social life, and the peace of his own conscience.

But not merely with words did Lennartson seize with a guiding hand upon the fate of Brenner. It was at the time when France made war on the States of Barbary. Lennartson managed so with Brenner's connexions that he should take part in this campaign, and fitted him out at his own expense, though at that time he was anything but rich. Lennartson, in his plan, had rightly judged of his friend, and accomplished his salvation.

With strong natures there is only one step between despair and heroism. With a lock of Lennartson's hair upon his breast, and his image deeply stamped upon his soul, the young Brenner plunged forward upon a path on which dangers of every kind called him forth to combat. To him, there was more than the conquering of people and kingdoms; to *him*, there was the winning again of honour; the winning again the esteem of himself, of his friends, and of his fatherland. And with the most joyful mad-bravery, he ventured his life for that purpose. The young Swede divided dangers and laurels with the Frenchmen. And upon the wild sea waves, in battle before the walls of Algiers, in

combats with Arabs and Kabyles on the soil of Africa, the French learned highly to esteem a bravery equal to their own (a greater is impossible,) and to love a humanity towards vanquished foes, with which they are not so well acquainted.

Afterwards, Brenner accompanied some learned Frenchmen on their dangerous journey into the interior of Africa. After an absence of nearly seven years, Brenner again saw his native land. Honour and esteem here met him. He soon found an opportunity of signalizing himself as a sea-officer, and was quickly advanced in the service.

The first use which Brenner made of the money that he obtained in service, was the payment of his debts at home. When he returned, he was no longer in debt—no! neither in money nor property. But one debt had he yet upon his soul, and this he longed to pay. He had left behind him during his absence a poor girl of noble mind, and of humble, though honest birth; whom he loved passionately, and who loved him equally as well. He swore solemnly to return to her, and to make her his wife. Years however went on. Only seldom flew a dove from burning Africa to misty Europe, to console the solitary heart. Poverty, care, and sickness, changed in the saddest manner the young blooming maiden. She knew it; was frightened at herself; and like the sick bird, which finds out a dark place in the wood in which to die, so did she retire far from the world, and determined to die for him whom she loved!

He sought her out, however, and found her. But he scarcely could have recognised her. He saw merely by the tone which at sight of him broke forth in her voice and in her look, that she was the same, and that she was true to him. He pressed her to his breast; he seized her hand in order to lead her to the altar. But she refused. Ah! she was so withered, so poor, so joyless. She should only encumber his life; should only follow him like a shadow upon his sun-brightened path of life. She would rather remain in her obscurity. She could, notwithstanding, gladden herself in its shade with the beams which surrounded him.

Thus spoke she in the earnestness of a pure heart; and whilst he read this heart, she became to him yet dearer than before. And he talked to her of accompanying him to lands of more beautiful climate; talked to her of new flowers on foreign, lovely shores; of the fresh wind and fresh waves of the sea; of dangers which they could share with each other; of burdens which she could lighten to him; of the omnipotence of love; of a new life. She listened to him; it went so fresh through her soul; it bloomed anew in her heart, she believed, and—followed him.

And upon her cheeks, which sickness had paled, Brenner impressed his kisses, breathed the fresh sea air. They bloomed again. When, after an absence of two years in foreign countries, he came back with his wife, she bloomed with health and happiness.

On the occasion of Brenner's marriage were heard many voices of disapproval and opposition; others also raised themselves approvingly, and no one's was warmer than that of Lennartson.

He and Brenner were from this time forth inseparable in their lives-interests, and still love one another as brothers—but very seldom do love.

"Why have I not seen Brenner's wife here?" I asked from my stepmother, affected by the relation which I had heard.

"Why?" replied my stepmother, smiling and rather hurt—"for a very good reason. She has been dead three years. The birth of her youngest child, cost her her life."

I sate there somewhat astonished, and almost shocked. My stepmother spoke of the beautiful qualities of the late deceased, and rather prided herself that she (my stepmother) had taken her under her wing and introduced her into society, in which she otherwise would not easily have gained admittance, on which account Brenner always feels and shews an indescribable gratitude, and so on.

I inquired if he had mourned much for his wife!

"Almost to insanity," replied my stepmother. "For nearly a year he could scarcely bear the sight of his children. Now, however, they are his greatest delight. And sweet amiable children are they—three boys and two girls."

It had struck twelve o'clock during this history, which had awoke in me such beneficial feelings.

The Countess G—— had promised to bring Flora home to spend an hour with us herself, in order to relate to us the splendours of the ball, if we only would wait for her till three o'clock in the morning with warm coffee. My stepmother, who is charmed with every thing lively and gay, promised it; and whilst Selma and I made giant steps in our Christmas-boxes, amid continued conversation about our two heroes, came unexpectedly the morning hour. Signora, Luna, and Flora came also, and now there was a zealous coffee-drinking and talk about the ball. The ball had been magnificent, and Flora one of its beaming stars; but—but it was with this magnificent ball as with so many others—it had been too hot, too much crowded. The ornamental quadrille in which Flora danced had had too little space in order to exhibit itself properly; the people who had to figure could not display themselves; people were almost overlooked, and had become mixed up with the crowd: in one word, they had not been amused.

"St. Orme among the gentlemen was the one who did most honour to his costume," said the Countess of G——, and added, "and was only somewhat too much of a Turk. Towards Flora in particular, he exercised a certain Sultan power. Perhaps," continued she archly, "the Gentleman Envoyé would thus hold all poor attachés in order."

Flora was the first who acknowledged the desire to go to rest; and whilst I went out to awake her sleeping maid, Anna, she ascended the steps which led to our chambers. Some time afterwards I also came up, and found her standing at the window of the corridor, looking thoughtfully out into the night illumined by feeble moonshine. As she did not appear to notice me, I touched her arm softly and asked,

"Where are thy thoughts now, lovely mask?"

"Where?" answered the Circassian, with a strangely ringing voice, "Now! in the wilder-

ness, where John nourished himself with locusts and clothed himself in camel's hair. Ah! to be there, far from the world, far from oneself!"

"Flora, you are"—strange, I would have added, but Flora interrupted me and said,

"Yes, what am I? I would really thank those who would tell me what I am. What I was—I know."

"And what were you?"

"A being gifted with the richest and most beautiful powers, which might have become—yet what is the use of speaking of that which I might have been? That which I shall become, begins to be tolerably clear to me."

"Certainly you may become whatever you really wish to be," said I.

Without seeming to regard these words, Flora continued bitterly, and full of thought—"Have you read in legends of people, who through evil magic-power have in one night been changed into Var-wolves, and have taken upon themselves the evil nature of those who have bewitched them?"

"Yes," replied I; "but I have also read that the christian name of the bewitched spoken by a loving voice, has the power of dissolving the magic and saving the unhappy one."

"Who calls me thus? Who loves me thus? Nobody, nobody!" exclaimed Flora; "and I do not deserve it. I am—not good! I am—but what matters it what I am? It will make nobody wise. Hate me as much as you can, Sophia. In so doing, you do the wisest thing. No! do not look so tragical. I laugh at myself, at you, and at the whole world."

Flora laughed, but not from her heart. Anna now came up.

"Will you not, for this once, let Anna go to rest, and accept me for your maid? I fancy I am not entirely without talent as——"

"No! my best Philosophia;" exclaimed Flora, laughing; "that I really cannot, although I curtsey low, and thank you for this proposal, so full of honour. Yet I would rather see my pins in Anna's hands than in yours, although she now looks like one of the seven sleeping virgins. Anna! do not fall upon the candle! You are the veriest nightcap in all Stockholm! Cannot you keep your eyes open for one quarter of an hour at night? Look at me! I have been awake the whole night, and am still so lively."

"Yes, that I believe," replied Anna grimly; "the young lady has amused herself, and danced, but——"

"If that is all that is wanted, you may dance on before me, in order to waken you."

Thus talking vanished the young lady and her maid in Flora's chamber, and I went into mine. But it was long before I could sleep; Lennartson and his mother, the Viking and his wife, stood so livingly before my soul; and then Flora, with her strange, capricious confession. Still in sleep it occupied me, and the beautiful Circassian, and Var-wolves, and locusts, made a strange confusion in my dreams.

The 21st.

A new revolution in Flora; a new light respecting Selma; with uncertain gleams respecting certain dark things. Signs of the times: conversation between my step-mother and me.

Felix Delphin's associates and friends; the gentlemen Rutschenfelt and Skutenhjelm, or the 'Rutschenfelts,' as they are called collectively, paid us, this morning, a rather unexpected visit, under the conduct of St. Orme and Felix. Their courteous errand was an invitation to a great sledging-party, whose originators they were, and which was to be on Sunday. Felix wished to drive Selma, and St. Orme invited Flora to his sledge. This was to be covered with tiger-skins, and would be drawn by fiery piebalds, which Flora had seen, and found much to her liking. This sledge was to lead the procession, which was to drive through the principal streets of the city to the park, where they were to dine, and after that were to dance, and so on.

Flora accepted the offer with evident delight, clapped her hands, and exclaimed, "Ah! I know nothing more divine than tiger-skins and fire-breathing horses! It will be a divinely-delightful drive!"

But Selma whispered suddenly to her, "Consent not, I pray you! Think on Lennartson!"

"Now, why then?" replied Flora, impatiently.

"He would not wish it. Defer at least a decided answer yet!"

"Ah! always difficulties and opposition when I wish any thing;" said Flora, stamping a little with her foot, and with the crimson of disquiet on her cheeks.

In the mean time Rutschenfelt had turned to my stepmother, and Skutenhjelm to me, with the offer of being our sledge-drivers. I looked at my stepmother, and my stepmother looked at me, and this time with unity of mind, since we both of us answered doubtfully, and prayed for time for consideration, before we could give a decided answer.

As we now all of us stood there undeterminedly and almost declining, the spirit of defiance entered Flora, and she said decidedly, "Others may do as they will, but I mean to go, and St. Orme has my promise."

"That is beautiful!" said he, "and I hope that the other ladies will follow so good an example. I will come this evening in order to receive the decided answer."

Scarcely was St. Orme gone, and the 'Rutschenfelts,' together with Felix, had rushed down stairs, when Lennartson entered. He soon was informed by my stepmother of that of which we spoke.

"What answer has Flora given?" asked he, short and hastily as he turned himself to her.

"I have promised to go with St. Orme," replied Flora, although evidently not with a good conscience—"I know not why I should refuse such an innocent pleasure."

"It grieves me, Flora," said Lennartson mildly, but gravely, "but I must beseech of you to give up this pleasure."

"It grieves me, Lennartson," said Flora insolently, "that I cannot follow your wishes. I have already given my promise to St. Orme, and my guardian will certainly not compel me to break my promise."

"In this case, I must require that you recal an over-hasty promise. I have my reasons for it, which I do not now wish to give. In one word, Flora shall not go with St. Orme!"

"Shall not!" cried Flora with flashing eyes, "and who can forbid me?"

"I!" said Lennartson, calmly but resolutely.

There was a time when I thought I never could hear a man speak dictatorially to a woman without my heart mutinying in my breast with hatred and bitterness. But now at this moment, I heard such a mode of speakeng and I was calm! I felt the whole force of a noble power.

Flora felt it also. She said nothing. She went quietly aside to a window. Lennartson talked for a good while with my stepmother and me, as if nothing had happened.

When I next looked at Flora she sate and sewed. She was pale, grave, and as it were, changed. After a time, Lennartson went and seated himself directly opposite to her in the window. He took her half-reluctant hand, and his eyes sought hers. But she only looked down the more at her work. At once two bright tears rolled down upon it. Lennartson whispered 'Flora!'

She raised her head, and looked at him with eyes that beamed with love.

Lennartson looked at her seriously, and at the same time evidently affected.

"Flora!" said he again, "how am I to understand you?"

"Can you not have confidence in me; not have faith in me; although you do not understand me?" replied she.

He said nothing, but kissed her hand repeatedly. Again several words passed between them, which I did not hear. When Lennartson arose, tears were in his eyes also. He bowed silently to us, and went out.

Flora sate silent for a long time, her face concealed in her pocket-handkerchief. I fancied she was deeply affected. But all at once she raised her head and exclaimed, "Ah, I mourn so about the tiger-skins and the fiery horses. I should have driven as in a triumphal procession. I would have worn my bright red fur and my bonnet with the white feathers—that would have looked enchantingly beautiful!"

Selma looked at her with a half-wounded, half-troubled glance, as if she would say to her, "how can you now think about such a thing?"

Flora observed it and exclaimed, "See! Selma, do not direct yourself by Sophia; and at any little flights of mine, do not go and look like a litany. I cannot help my liking that which is splendid and beautiful. And some little pleasure will I have in this life if I am to live. Ah! a sunny, gay life is glorious. Take two cups, and pour into the one the bitter draught of renunciation, and into the other youth, strength, health, pleasure, joy,—and I would defy even you, wise Philosophia, not to grasp after the latter. O! I would that I could drink out the latter, drink it to the very lees."

"And would," said I, "find there just the bitterest portion of the draught which you have represented to be the contents of the first cup. For my part, I will have a better joy—than pleasure; a better draught of refreshment than amusement."

"Give me," exclaimed Flora, "amusement, enjoyment! Create for me pleasure, pleasure, pleasure; and after that—let me die! So speaks a candid person."

"But not so a reasonable one," said I, smiling.

"And who told you that I am a reasonable person?" exclaimed Flora, with vehemence, as she waltzed around a few times. "Perhaps I am not at all a person. Perhaps I am one of those beings who float between heaven and earth, without the property of belonging to either of them, and which, therefore, dance upon the earth as bright will-o'-the-wisps. And—perhaps it is better so to dance, than like you and others, to grope over that about which nobody wants any certainty. Come, Selma dear, let us waltz. Play us something from Strauss, Sophia; the wilder the better."

I played, and the two young girls danced; and that was just now as good as talking rationally with Flora. And sometimes people dance themselves into quiet, sooner than one can reason them into it. At the bottom of all Flora's outbreaks lay an inward disquiet. The whole day she was in an overstrained changeable humour, and seemed purposely to avoid becoming quiet and rational.

In the afternoon St. Orme came, and at sight of him Flora drew herself together.

"How is it with our sledging-party?" was his first question.

Flora, with assumed calmness, besought him to excuse her, taking back her promise for this party. "An earlier promise—another engagement, which she had forgotten this morning, prevented her—"

St. Orme heard her excuses with a dark look, and a crafty smile upon his thin lips. He then approached her, and said with a low voice,—

"May one know what promise it is which prevents you from fulfilling the one which you made to me? But perhaps you have also now forgotten that?"

"That may be!" said Flora, with negligent pride.

"Such forgetfulness never occurs to me," said St. Orme, with a mild but expressive voice: "I have a good memory; and I can also prove it by that which I bear upon my breast." With these words he folded back his waistcoat a little, and I saw a somewhat shine, which appeared to me in the haste to be a red-coloured silken ribbon. But paler was the red than that upon Flora's cheeks. She clenched her hand convulsively, and exclaimed in a bitter tone, as she turned herself suddenly from St. Orme to me: "How happy men are! They can with arms in their hands demand right or revenge! Ah, that I were a man!"

"Would you then fight with me, my lovely cousin?" asked St. Orme, smiling. "Should we fight a duel?"

"Yes," cried Flora; "hotly, for life and death!"

"It is fortunate for me," continued St. Orme in a jesting tone, "that you are only a lady. And now I council you to use no other weapons against me than your beautiful eyes. To these I am ready to resign myself captive. Adieu, Flora! Adieu, Sophia! I wish you much pleasure this evening."

It was Abonnement's-day; and Flora and Selma were to go to the opera, with Mrs. Rittersvärd and her daughter, to my stepmother's box. My stepmother herself was a little wearied, and wished not to go: and I promised Selma that I, at all events, should stay at home to keep her company, and to amuse her.

"And hear, thou sweet angel," whispered

Selma archly before she went; "do not be too rigidly-Christian in thy love of justice towards the Gyllenlöfs and the Silfverlings, in case the conversation turn upon them. Such 'spasmodic acquaintance' can bear a little bitterness and peppering."

I promised to be severe against them, and desired an explanation of the phrase 'spasmodic acquaintance;' but she asked, "is it possible not to understand it? O golden innocence!" And she ran away, laughing at my ignorance.

Alone with my stepmother, I remarked that we, on both sides, were laden with strong material for a great conversation, and desired nothing better than to come together.

'It is extraordinary,' began we, both of us, as we seated ourselves by the evening lamp. (N B. We begin our political discourses always with 'it is extraordinary,' or 'it is wonderful,' or 'it is quite inconceivable;' or with a similar expression of excitement, as an introduction to observations on some questions of the day. And as my stepmother and I, in consequence of our different political tendencies, take in opposition newspapers, so it is of consequence to us to have met with any appropriate reflection or phrase therein, in order that we may startle one another, nay indeed, sometimes strike one another; but all in the very best friendliness, of course! This has been a horribly long parenthesis! Now I had exactly to-day read in my newspaper various remarkable facts on the progress of industry, and had appropriated to myself a strong phrase respecting this giant work. It was as an introduction to it that I began with 'it is remarkable.' And now at length is the parenthesis ended.)—When I heard my stepmother begin in the very same way as I had begun, I gave with due reverence the preference to her 'extraordinary fact;' and it showed itself not to be the industrial spirit of the age, but it was 'some people, and their want of understanding and good feeling,' of which my stepmother had had to-day an extraordinary proof. I saw Count Gyllenlöfs coming; and they came too, and with them Silfverlings. We complained sadly of the first, on account of their want of good breeding, on account of their vanity and their haughtiness; and we made the others ridiculous, on account of their foppery and their gentility. 'The poor people!' they know no better. They are as pitiable as they are ridiculous, said we.

From them we went to other friends and acquaintance, and blew good and ill luck over the people. We added a little to the palsy of Mrs Rittersvärd, and made it more apoplectic, and overturned a little the triumphal-chariot of 'the Beauty,' so as to help us in deciding the choice of Sparrsköld, between beauty and virtue; that is to say, Flora's sister, and Helfrid Rittersvärd.

My stepmother wished greatly, for the sake of her good friend Mrs. Rittersvärd, that the daughter might marry well, and Lieutenant Sparrsköld is a distinguished young man, and has good prospects; my stepmother, however, believes in the conquest of beauty, I hoped in the conquest of virtue, and we laid a wager upon it.

During all these arrangements for friends and relatives, I endeavoured, unobserved, to approach our own family, in order to hear the thoughts of my stepmother on the signs and movements which now were going on within it. I revealed also for that purpose, some of my remarks on St. Orme, Flora, and Lennartson, and on the strange relationship between them.

My stepmother listened with excited attention, and put some sudden questions; but instead of opening to me her views, she withdrew herself at once into the intrenchments of the mystery, and with a demeanour which would have been worthy of Prince Metternich himself, said, "You must be convinced, my dear Sophia, that I see every thing—see and hear perfectly every thing which goes on around me, although I say nothing, nor will meddle in the affair, before I—"

Here began the diplomatic water-gruel. I swallowed it, and a little vexation. Unexpectedly, my stepmother turned towards me with remarks on me and my position in life, together with certain entrapping questions, as to whether I would not change it in case a suitable, good offer invited me—for example, if an elderly, sedate man, of good character, respectability, property, education, and handsome establishment, should offer, and so on.

Mortified a little by my stepmother's omniscience and reserve, thinks I, "if my stepmother will enact Prince Metternich, then I can enact Prince Talleyrand;" and instead of replying to the inquiries of my stepmother, I began a warm panegyric on the freedom and emancipation of woman. My stepmother at this became very violent, and without understanding how and what I properly meant, opposed herself, with her utmost zeal, to all emancipation. I wished to explain, but she would—as I also, in fact—only hear herself, and so we over-clamoured one another for a long time.

The return of the opera-going ladies interrupted us. They came, accompanied by Lennartson, the young Sparrsköld, and Felix. Signora Luna and her '*caro sposo*' increased our evening party, who, after accounts of the opera, were drawn into the strife which was on foot between my stepmother and me. They agreed that it should be fought out during supper. It was done with veritable zeal. All spake on the subject with the exception of Selma. I had Ake Sparrsköld and Signora Luna on my side. The Rittersvärds and the Great Alexander ranged themselves on the side of my stepmother. The latter was much troubled; her eyes twinkled much when I mentioned Thorild, and quoted certain passages which may be read in the fourth part of his collected works (page 84), and which certain gentlemen and certain ladies would do well a little to consider.

Lennartson for some time took merely a jesting part in the conversation, and amused himself with nullifying the arguments, right and left, by sallies of wit, mine in particular; at lenght, however, on my gravely demanding that he should understand me, he said some serious rectifying words on the subject; some of those words, of great understanding, which are more charming to hear than the most delicious music. I delighted myself by storing them up against a future day of judgment. These words closed the discussion. Baron Alexander was,

however, much less satisfied with the decision. I concluded this from his reply to his lady, when she proposed that he should invite Lennartson for one day in the week when she should have company. He replied with a gruff negative, and as she beseechingly represented.

"But my friend," he interruptod her peremptorily. "But my friend, I will not. It may be your place to propose things, but it is mine to decide. And now I have decided on this thing, and I will not hear another word."

The Countess G—— was silent; but a cloud passed over her countenance.

It is no wonder to me if she be a radical in the Emancipation question.

When we had separated for the night, Selma accompanied me (as she often does) with a light up to my chamber. There I reproached her jestingly for not having supported my motion this evening, and accused her of being altogether without any "*esprit de corps*."

She denied laughingly the accusation, but said that for her part she had not felt yet the necessity of emancipation.

"I have," said she, "looked up to the people who ruled over me. You know how kind my mother is towards me; how she wishes only my happiness, and does every thing for it. And my father! Ah! how happy was I, that I could love him, obey him, direct myself in all things by him. And after his death—" She stopped suddenly and blushed. I continued. "Well? and after his death."

"Yes, then I became acquainted with another man, and looked up to him."

"Aha!" thought I, and a light broke in upon me. "May I ask the name of the man?" said I, not without an arch look; "may I—name Lennartson?"

With great seriousness, but with a secret tremor of voice, Selma replied—

"I shall always be glad to have become acquainted, in him, with the noblest and best man on the earth. Might, O might Flora but make him happy! For me I wish merely to be his sister, his friend, and to have the right to be near him, to save him, to contribute in any way to his happiness. May he be happy! may he be happy with Flora!"

"And then, my Selma, shall I not see thee happy with—

"With no, no husband!" interrupted Selma, warmly; "but I have a mother, I have thee, Sophia! I will live for you, and for the others who are dear to me. It is so sweet to love! But now, my mother indeed thinks that I am quite bewitched here. Good-night, sweet, good, wise, dearest sister!"

She kissed me tenderly and joyfully, and I heard her singing Klärchen's song in Goethe's Egmont, as she went down stairs,

Glücklich allein ist die Seele die liebt.

The 23d.

Poor Felix! He loves Selma so warmly, and fears not being loved again. He is unhappy and dissatisfied with himself and with the whole world. He prays me to be to him friend and sister. How gladly will I! His warm heart and his confidence have softened me towards him; but—but—!

The 24th.

I feel now more clearly, that I am here on a volcanic soil; a soil, which gnawing passions make at the same time interesting and dangerous. For who can tell what the explosion may turn out—whether it may merely produce a beautiful atmospheric appearance, or desolate whole countries. Were not my own heart already too much brought into play on my young sister's account, I should view these scenes of human life, and the enfolding of this, in some respects, puzzling connexion, with calmness, and also with pleasure.

Ah! it is good however, when the youthful time is over, and quieter years come. It is good when the wild combat of the feelings allays itself; good also that it has been, for it has—produced a world! And over it floats a new spirit with new life; the quiet spirit of thought, which lays coolingly its hand on our hot brows, separates darkness from light, and says to the eye 'be clear,' and to life 'be calm.'

In the Evening.

What is this? Will the frenzy of love and romance which is in this family, infect, indeed, the whole world? Or is it with certain mental dispositions, as with the nocturnal dance of the Scottish witches, who draw into their circle whatever comes near to them, and compel it—to dance with them? But no! In the name of free-will, it shall not become so! and for that reason I will—immediately, make confession to myself.

Full of the composing and gladdening thoughts which I had written down this morning, I went out to take a walk. I find great pleasure in rambling through Stockholm, and in looking about me on these occasions. How many various shapes of life move themselves in a large city! how many human propensities and gifts here have taken bodily shape and glance forth with peculiar, marked physiognomies! I find pleasure in observing these little worlds, and in thinking how they all strive forth towards the same sun, and may be brightened by it; I find pleasure in conversing with them, and in letting them answer me.

The Finnish national poem Kalevala, calls the radical words, the words with which the spirits and the being of nature rule each other, PRIMEVAL WORDS, and these words seem to be the PRIMEVAL-BEING of things themselves, the mystery of their inward life. Whenever they may be addressed or conjured in such words, they must answer, they must obey.

This has a deep, gladdening truth.

But one finds not when one will PRIMEVAL WORDS, (neither in the poem Kalevala, nor in actuality). One must be in a particular frame of mind. . . . .

This day was favourable in an especial manner for life and observation, for its changing play of shadow and light caused the various regions of the city to appear in a changeful and living manner.

More than ever was I captivated by the individual beauty of Stockholm; historical memories rose up like crowned spirits from the seven islands. . . . I seemed to hear the song of the Sagas in the winds, in the rushing of the waves on these shores, which good and evil deeds, with great actions and great sufferings, have stamped with their poetic seal.

Once saw I a chief-city without any towers,

without any one building exceeding in beauty and size the rest; all were equal, and people said, 'see here the image of a true social community.'

But no! thus appears it not. When a people come to the consciousness of its full life, its cities and its buildings will testify of it: there must the flaming spires of the temples ascend to the sky; there must columns of honour stand in memorial of great men; there must magnificent palaces (not private ones!) express the sense of greatness in a noble public spirit; there must the *beautiful* express in manifold forms the *good* in the life of the state.

But whither does my wandering pen conduct me! My feet led me this time southward, quite high up the mountain and then down to the strand, and into a boat, in order to come by it again to the North. I had just seen a man come out from a small house on the shore, where a pale elderly woman followed him with blessings to the door, and saw him now go with hasty steps down the stairs to the strand, where the boat lay. As I came down, he turned himself round, and with a joyful 'Ah!' and outstretched arms, helped me lightly into the boat, when he took his place at the helm. It was the Viking!

It pleased me to meet with him, especially as I remarked that his large brown eyes rested upon me with the same expression as they had done on the first evening of our acquaintance. I was warm from walking, the wind had played somewhat wildly with my hair, I knew that I was looking well and saw that the Viking thought so also. A certain satisfaction in soul and body; the low dashing of the waves around me, the mild air, the rich spectacle round about, Brenner's presence,—all gave me a feeling of exalted life, and this caused me involuntarily to give expression to the thoughts and impressions which had animated and still animated me.

Brenner listened to me with evident sympathy and pleasure; but when I expressed my wish "that people still more and more would come to understand life by the light of reason, and to live in bright thoughts," he shook his head, and said,

"Science and philosophy cannot make people better, and contribute but little to their true happiness. The inclinations of the heart alone give to life fulness and worth. The pure atmosphere of thought appears to me like the air of Mont Blanc; one can see in it all the great stars and the clouds under one's feet, but one can scarcely breathe, and all life is soon extinguished from want of the breath of life."

I replied; "The life of thought excludes not the life of feeling, but rules it, and prevents its preponderance. Reason saves man from much suffering."

"Reason!" exclaimed the Viking; "I will know nothing of such reason as kills the best life of the soul, which prevents man from suffering. Without suffering life is not worth much."

I felt myself struck by this thought, and especially by the looks and the tone in which it was spoken, yet notwithstanding, I said,—

"There is so much irrational, aimless suffering; so much tormenting feeling, without rhyme or reason."

"Ah!" said Brenner; "much that appears irrational, is still at bottom good; if it be for nothing else than to slay the egotism which makes us so careful about ourselves, so calculating, so coldly-and-stiffly reasonable that it is ——horrible. Feelings without rhyme or reason! They are precisely such as these which please me. Who, for example, speaks of a rational love? And yet love is the noblest feeling of life, its sublimest flower. I, for my part, never am rational—never was so—and never, I hope, shall be."

Smiling and well-pleased I combated his arguments, and would know nothing of any other than of a rational love; whereupon the Viking grew hot, but in a cheerful and good-humoured way.

When we lay to at Logarden, and Brenner offered his hand to assist me out, he said, "Do not be angry with me on account of my want of reason, Miss Adelan! I will see whether I cannot improve."

"Perhaps we shall understand each other better for the future," said I cheerfully, and with a friendly feeling.

"Thanks for the words! Yes, may we do so!" said the Viking, and pressed my hand.

What does all this denote? and why does it give me pleasure to please this man, whom I have known so short a time? No, Cousin Flora, it is not a passion for conquest, at least not a blameable one, and—if it had been so for a moment, I would take care that it no longer remained so. For to wish to be agreeable to persons whom one finds agreeable, that is no sin, and no weakness; but a pleasing and becoming nature. It is the foundation of all that which makes social life charming and happy. But human love must not be degraded into——

The 25th.

Worse and worse! Yesterday as we landed I expressed my delight at some hyacinths and jonquils which were carried past us. To-day these flowers diffuse their odour in my room. They were accompanied by a note from the Viking!

Good, now! Flowers are the symbol of good-will and friendship. I will regard these as such.

The 29th.

The Baroness Bella B., the Beauty, and Helfrid Rittersvärd, paid us a visit. Afterwards, Ake Sparrsköld, Felix, and others. "The Beauty" expatiated (quite *mal-à-propos*, methinks) on the unhappiness and disagreeableness of ugliness. She pities 'from her heart, plain people;' but they must at least know that they are plain, and must stop nicely at home, and not exhibit themselves out in the world, and in society, where they can awaken only disagreeable feelings.

I was provoked at this speech, which evidently was made with reference to Helfrid Rittersvärd, whose calm, classical demeanour I admired at this moment. She only cast a quiet, patient look upon the cruel 'Beauty,' and said mildly, "As it is not plain people's fault that they are plain, it is excusable if they go among their fellow-beings with the confidence that they will show indulgence and kindness towards them; nay, precisely on account of their misfortune, if one must take the affair so seriously."

This was said with an indescribably noble expression, and I should have replied with warmth, had not young Sparrsköld anticipated me as he exclaimed,—

"I cannot understand the importance which certain people set upon outward beauty or plainness. I am of opinion that all true education, such at least as has a religious foundation, must infuse a noble calm, a wholesome coldness, an indifference, or whatever people may call it, towards such-like outwatd gifts, or the want of them. And who has not experienced of how little consequence they are in fact for the weal or woe of life? Who has not experienced how, on nearer acquaintance, plainness becomes beautified, and beauty loses its charm, exactly according to the quality of the heart and mind? And from this cause I am also of opinion, that the want of outward beauty never disquiets a noble nature, or will be regarded as a misfortune. It never can prevent people from being amiable and beloved in the highest degree. And we have daily proof of this."

I would have embraced the young man for these words, which calling forth a look of vexation in the countenance of the Beauty, made her plain, whilst a joyful emotion diffused over Helfrid's countenance the splendour of beauty. Ake Sparrsköld had never appeared handsomer to me than at this moment. Later in the evening he sang. He had an extremely agreeable voice. I said so to Miss Rittersvärd; she agreed, but so shortly, that I might have fancied her to be cold, had I not observed by her look that her feelings were only too warm.

The 1st of December.

Visits and entertainment. Rutschenfelts and Co.; together with a conversation which turned upon Gyllenlöf's soireés, magnificent rooms and furniture, and such like; as well as on the delicate dinners of the new-married couple, the O——sköld's. What wine! what delicacies! St. Orme gave the ton, and Felix and his friends joined in. Among these, a young Captain Rumler (Ake Sparrsköld's captain) distinguished himself, whom the other young gentlemen looked up to with a certain admiration and a certain envy His domestic establishment was described as a pattern of comfort and elegance, was celebrated as a pattern of a bachelor's housekeeping. People spoke in particular of his sleeping-room, of his expensive toilet, and of his own portrait, which was hung up there over his own bed. (This seemed to me like a little idol-temple of self, and I felt at that moment contempt mount up within me). Beyond this, his connoisseurship in the delicacies of the table was extolled.

He, however, politely yielded the palm in this to the Chamberlain, who accepted it modestly; as he confessed, that although in Sweden people were rather 'gourmand' than 'gourmet,' yet that he belonged to the latter class of people.

Felix agreed with him, that in roast veal there are only three pieces which are 'really eatable.' By degrees, they began to draw a picture of all that which was required in these days to make life comfortable. (Nevertheless, I suspect, from what I know of certain connexions of Captain Rumler, that certain necessaries of this felicitous life were now omitted, out of regard to the ladies who were present.) Felix sighed deeply, in regard to the sum of money which the satisfying of all these wants demanded.

In the mean time, Lennartson was occupied in a distant part of the room in reading various newspapers; still I am convinced that he heard all that was spoken in the room. At length, rising and approaching the company, he smiled and exclaimed:

"Here is also a picture of human wants which is original. Will the gentlemen hear it?" And he read from a newspaper which he held in his hand the following article from Hernösand.*

"The learned mathematical lecturer Aurén died here during the past month,† at the age of eighty-one, He was the author of several learned works, and among these some on Biblical Chronology, which he published at his own expense. Notwithstanding he amassed out of his small salary, on which he lived, and in his latter years divided with a curate, the sum of eight thousand rix dollars. This could not have been done without the most perfect self-denial of all worldly pleasures and comforts. To what extent he carried these sacrifices may be shewn by this, that his needy dwelling, even in the severest weather, was never warmed, nor was ever a candle lighted within it. When darkness came down, he lay on his bed, whilst his favourites the stars, which were to him sufficient company, furnished a subject for his thoughts, or, if the heavens were clear, for his observation. That he was not impelled hereto by a sordid selfishness, is proved as much by the support which during his life he privately extended to cases of necessity, as by the noble manner in which he has disposed of his property.

"Four thousand eight hundred rix-dollars he has appropriated to two stipends. He has given a garden in the city to an old man, whose wife tenderly and carefully attended to him during the latter years of his life. The remainder of his property descends to his needy connexions."

After Lennartson had ended, a short silence ensued in the room. Selma's beaming eyes were directed to the reader, while the eyes of Felix rested upon her.

Now arose a light murmur:—"Well, yes! an anchorite, a hermit,—but one cannot live in this way if one lives in the world, if one will live with people."

"That I confess," answered Lennartson; "but it is a question whether the system of lecturer Aurén will not contribute more than the system which prevails here, towards the obtaining peace and happiness during a long life on earth."

"I would as soon die to-morrow morning," exclaimed Felix, "as live a long life without human happiness!"

"And I," cried Skutenhjelm, "would rather shoot myself through the head the day after to-morrow, than sentence myself to lie a tithe of the year in darkness and cold. If one is to be buried, it is better to be dead first."

"You forget," said Lennartson, smiling, "that Aurén saw the stars beaming over him, and certainly found more pleasure from them than

* The capital city of Norland. † February, 1842.

we from the waxlights in our drawing-rooms. And as concerns human happiness," continued he, as he looked at Felix, "I am sorry that a young man should not understand the pleasure which he has enjoyed—the pleasure of useful activity—the pleasure of—doing good."

There was in Lennartson's look and voice, something so serious as he spoke these last words, that Felix evidently was struck by them. The tears came to his eyes, he went away, took a book, and sat down at a table. Selma's eyes followed him evidently with deep sympathy. Lennartson observed her attentively.

Some time afterward, as St. Orme was continuing the interrupted conversation with some gentlemen, and was relating to them various particulars of Paris life and its charms, Lennartson went to Selma, seated himself by her, and said gently, "was I too severe, Miss Selma?"

"O no!" replied she with animation, "there was so much justice in what you said, but—

"But what? What but!"

"I think that your words really grieved his heart, and——he thinks so much of you."

Lennartson said nothing; but after a while I saw him approach Felix, and lay his hand upon his shoulder.

Felix reddened deeply as he looked up, and with a look of sincere love met the glance of kindness which Lennartson directed to him.

"I have not seen you for a long time in my house, Felix," said Lennartson with friendliness. "Will not you dine with me to-morrow? I promise you," continued he pleasantly joking, "no O—skoldish dinner; but I promise also that neither shall you be treated with Aurénish household-fare. I confess that I myself should be but little satisfied therewith."

Felix accepted the invitation half-embarrassed and half-pleased.

After the guests were gone, we, particularly my stepmother and I, made our '*reflexions chrétiennes et morales*," on the Aurénish and St. Ormish ideas of life. I grew warm for the first. My stepmother poured cold water over my fire, and talked of 'exaltation, overstraining, and excess;' and said that one might be "yet very good if one lived like other people, took part in the pleasures of the world, and enjoyed its good things." My stepmother was for the motto of Queen Christina—'moderation' (which she herself, however, generally managed to forget). Flora was thoughtful, and said, "when I was a child, and in my early youth, I had sometimes such Aurénish and Pythagorian fancies; I dreamed of—but they soon taught me to laugh at such dreams, and to seek after other aims. Yet, perhaps, these were more of dreams, more of deceptions, than the first. Ah!" continued Flora, with a sudden burst of melancholy, "who can be born anew; who can again be a little child!"

She burst into tears. Selma threw her arms round her, and began to weep with her. My stepmother looked quite in consternation, and I reproached her jestingly with this '*lamentabile*.' Selma came over to my side, and so ended we the day, '*scherzando*.'

The 14th December.

We have passed some weeks in visiting the collections of works of art, academies, and various other public institutions of the capital. To many of these shall I often again return, for many of them have have had great interest for me. And wherein indeed lies the worth of a solid education, if not thereby enabling us to understand and value every species of useful human activity; and in opening our eyes to life in all its affluence. It offers us also an extended life. I remarked too with pleasure, how willingly scientific men turn themselves to those in whom they perceive a real interest, and where they feel that they are understood.

Lennartson, who was our conductor in these visits, by his own great knowledge, and by the art of inducing others to unfold theirs, increased our pleasure in the highest degree. And how highly esteemed and valued is he by all. Flora listened attentively to him, but seldom to another, and betrayed quite too great a desire to shine herself. Selma belongs to those who say not much themselves, but who understand much and conceal much in their hearts. Lennartson and I listen attentively to every one of her remarks. They always contain something exciting, and often something suggestive. She has a beautiful and pure judgment. A good head, together with a good heart, is a glorious thing in a human being.

Now it is necessary to sit still; to be industrious, and to finish Christmas knick-knacks in two days. It is not my affair.

The 25th.

The Christmas-eve is over, with its Christmas knick-knacks, lights, and tarts. My stepmother, who thinks much of children, had invited here those of several of her acquaintance, and among them those of the Viking. Selma had prepared many trifles for the little ones, which occasioned great delight; and we amused ourselves by contriving plays for them, in which Selma was just as much a child as any of the rest. Felix helped us with ready good-will, but Flora was out of humour, and would neither amuse herself nor others. Brenner's children are lively, sweet creatures, and it did one good to see their behaviour to their father. Rosine, the eldest, an eight-years-old girl, and the youngest boy, little Adolf, pleased me much. The poor little fellow is somewhat lame in the hip. Was it now 'mother's love' which, as a professor, one of my friends, asserts, exists in all women, or a particular liking which drew me towards the little boy; but this is certain, that when I had set him on my knee, and he had looked up to me with a clear and joyous child's glance, I was involuntarily compelled in an actual feeling, of love and longing, to embrace him protectingly, and to clasp him in my arms and to my breast. But as I saw that his father observed us with a look, as if he would have liked to have embraced us both, I became cooler in my tenderness. And how the father must love the children! Did I not hear him say this evening, that one must in choosing a wife take into consideration the future children, and what father and mother one would give them. I could not do otherwise than for the most part concede the right to him in this respect.

The crown of the evening to me was my countryman Runeberg's beautiful little poem, 'The Christmas Eve,' which the Viking had brought with him, and read aloud with a pure

and noble expression. He placed me again in my native land, in its wild natural scenery, amid its powerful, contented, and patient people.

My heart swelled. And now—it is church-time, and I shall go to church.

In the Evening.

The sun shone through a great eye into the chancel as I entered the church, and light smoke-clouds from the lights, which had been extinguished after the early sermon, floated through the rays of light upwards into the vaulted roof. It was beautiful. The church, although I came early, was so full of people that it was not possible for me to find a seat, especially as many strove for the same thing. After some vain attempts I took the resolve of standing during service, and found a safe place against a wall, near to women who were sitting, and girls who were standing, to whom I offered eau de Cologne. I was happy in my soul, and had never felt more congregational. As the organ broke forth with its mighty tones the blood rushed through my veins, and a gentle shudder passed through me as a single voice elevated itself, and strongly and softly sang of the highest wonder of the world—of the wonder of which the people even now, and now perhaps more than ever, speak with admiration—

A Virgin has conceived, and borne a son.

Now joined in the congregation, and I with them, with a full, overflowing heart. Scarcely had the song ended when I heard near my corner a tolerably harsh voice, which asked—

"Has Miss Adelan no seat?"

It was the Viking; he was so kind as to compel me to take his seat at a little distance. I must do this for the sake of quiet in the church. Brenner remained then standing near me, and accompanied me home after the service.

At home, I found Flora in a stormy temper. She had headache from the screams of the children on the former evening; she knew no days so bad as Sundays, when one must be sad and religious. This whole day we should be alone, according to the regulation of my stepmother; on this day her domestics go to church, and are allowed to rest. Neither were we either invited out. What was one to do with the whole long day? One might gape oneself to death. And to-morrow! Then it would be still worse with us. One should die of over-exertion. Then would a great fishing-net bring to us the whole populous relationship. A dozen and a half of uncles and aunts, every one of them turtles; and more than a score of cousins, all of the generation of haddocks. And one should be compelled to see these from noon-day till midnight; from noon-day till midnight one must be polite to them; and from noon-day till midnight one must amuse them. Ah! one should go distracted!

Selma and I, and at last also Flora herself, were obliged to laugh at these desperate circumstances, and we made various propositions for boldly meeting them.

I proposed that we should all agree to be merry, and to fall into whatever Christmas joke we might be inspired with. But Selma met that with a slight shaking of the head, and with 'that will not do.' Several of our gracious aunts are a little prim, and the Lord has given to me such a fund of joy, that certainly—were I to let this out before them—they would really think me crazy. Upon this my stepmother came and besought us to be 'tranquil;' all would go on well and easily; she was accustomed to such things. We should only not torment ourselves, but keep ourselves cheerful, and so on. Selma sighed, and began to sing a song. In the evening, she entertained her mother and me with reading to us. Flora went early to bed, and this was a relief to us all.

The third Christmas-day.

The great fishing-bout is over, and we repose, well pleased, upon our laurels.

The dinner—well! during dinner one can always live, even with forty persons. Good eating is good company, and puts people in good humour. A great loss was it that the Chamberlain did not come. We had reckoned upon his 'good stories,' as upon the pepper and salt of the dinner. But he has taste only for small select dinner-parties, and has no inclination to sacrifice himself.

Immediately after dinner they had coffee, which also is enlivening; but after this comes a heavy interval, namely, from coffee to tea-time. One is heavy from eating; heavy from the heat; heavy from the company of thirty heavy people; heavy from the duty of entertaining these. All this is not light. I know very well, however, that the person who looks most petrified, has in himself a living, enlightening spark, and that it only requires a fire-steel wherewith to strike this, in order to call it out; I have often experienced that with pleasure, and I began therefore now to go about in the company as a fire-steel; but it either was my fault, or the fault of the others, nowhere would it give fire, nay, not even smoke or crackle the least. True is it—and I said this for my comfort—that I was too little acquainted with most of the present guests rightly to understand how to strike upon them. Flora gave herself not the least trouble about the company, but sate there with the most annoyed countenance in the world, and turned over a memorandum-book.

Selma moved with the most heartfelt politeness and kindness here and there in the company, and began now with one and now with another a conversation, and tried to make the people chat together, and wherever she turned herself, there her sweetness failed not to call forth a little life; but it soon died out again when she was gone. With one word, it would not succeed, but was ever stiller and stiller, hotter and heavier; and I remembered a witty Countess's description of a soirée in our highest '*haute volée*'—"We were like fish in a fish-tank, which, on account of the heat, swim slowly about and wind about another, and only now and then move their gills a little."

Three or four card-tables had taken away a part of the gentlemen; but we had several, who neither played nor yet talked, and the whole mass of sitting ladies, and—these were to be entertained till twelve o'clock at night!

It was now somewhat after six. My stepmother sate on the sofa, and swallowed her yawns under the most polite gestures; but her look was more and more troubled, and her eye sought Selma, and asked intelligibly 'what are we to do?'

Selma came to me and whispered "this is horrible! In my despair I have just now related a little bit of scandal to my aunt Pendelfelt, but she looked with such a 'God defend us' air, that I took to flight. But now we must set on foot a revolution, in order to enliven us. Poor mamma looks as if she were ready to fly the field! Hast thou no little suggestion—no bright idea?"

"Yes, a splendid idea! We will introduce a Finland Christmas-game, with song and dance, which I remember. I will propose it."

"Ah! that will never do."

"It must do." And I lifted my voice, and proposed to the company to take part in a Christmas game.

I could see by the horrible and perfect stillness which followed my proposal, how bold it was, and my stepmother looked somewhat embarrassed on my account.

But I have a certain Finnish vein in me, which makes me with lively perseverance go through with whatever is begun with boldness. I renewed therefore my proposition, and turned myself particularly to some gentlemen and ladies in company, and explained to them the plan of the game, and besought them to take part. I found several, especially among the ladies, ready to fall into my scheme, but—it was so difficult! "The game was to be accompanied with song, and they could not sing," and so on, with a thousand difficulties; and the royal secretary, Krusenberg, whom I besought to open the dance with me, started back horrified, and exclaimed, 'No, heaven forbid, my gracious lady! Impossible that I can!'

It began to get darker before my eyes, as to how the affair was to be managed, when my fortunate star opened the door of the ante-room, and Signora Luna, the Baron, and Lieutenant Sparrskold, entered.

"We are saved," whispered I to Selma, "if we can only excite them to interest themselves in our proposal."

"That will easily be done, I fancy," replied she. "I see Lennartson approach us, we will speak with him."

And when Lennartson came to us we told him our trouble, and I prayed him with my whole heart to help me in my daring undertaking. As long as I live shall I be thankful for the readiness and kindness with which he entered into the affair. There are actions in social life which show as much goodness of soul and human love, as visiting the captives does.

I went with the Baron to Signora Luna to beg for her help; and now our horizon became perfectly bright, for she replied frankly and joyously that she would be 'more than willing' to lead this game, which she knew, and which she had often played in her childhood. And as the kindly-beaming Mrs. Luna opened the dance with the Baron, and I followed on Sparrskold's hand, up sprung the royal secretary Krusenburg to Selma, and prayed to dance with her; thus a great movement took place, a stirring and rising in the whole company, and the procession, as it turned out into the large ante-room, became greater and ever greater. My stepmother engaged the little Miss M., who had no partner; other ladies followed her example; gray-headed men and matrons joined; everybody was soon upon their legs, and the merry game in full progress, and jest and laughter flourished. My stepmother began to look quite happy.

It was a surprise to me when I saw among the dancers St. Orme, whose entrance I had not noticed, and discovered Flora, no longer the contrary, ill-humoured Flora, but, in the light of the newly-arrived gentleman's glances, a more and more joyous and charmingly beaming Flora.

The game was not properly a game of forfeits, but the baron made it such, at the instigation of Signora Luna, who thought that the redeeming of the forfeits would be amusing. And as the dancing had continued some time, and it looked as if people begun to be a little tired, and a great number of forfeits were collected, 'Our lady' with the bright eyes seated herself magnificently and solemnly in the middle of the circle, and said—

I burn, I burn, I glow, I glow,
Who owns this forfeit I would know?

One of the first who had to redeem a forfeit was the royal secretary Krusenberg. His penalty was to declaim something before the company, and as his talent in this art was well known, a general expectation was excited, which was all the more increased by the subtle countenance with which the young declamator proceeded to his work. He had often shown during this game that he wished to produce an 'effect,' and now set about most properly to 'startle us.' He did this truly, but not in a pleasant way; for he began with great pathos to declaim—the Lord's Prayer.

With a flash of noble indignation in her eyes, Selma rose up, went to him and said, "Mr. Secretary Krusenberg, it were better that you never said the holy words, than that you spoke them here in that way."

The declamator looked somewhat confounded.

"Defend us! Miss Selma is severe to-day!" said he reddening, and added, while he endeavoured to look quite at his ease, "Well then, I must then seize upon something else;" and he began to read some French verses, but he did it not in any extraordinary manner: he was evidently out of tune from the little scene, and from the impression which it seemed to have made upon the company. I immediately looked at Lennartson, who stood a little out of the circle, and read in his eyes, which followed Selma, an expression of decided approbation and pleasure.

With highly-crimsoned cheeks, Selma seated herself by me, and after she had been for some time silent, she turned her lovely and once more gentle eyes to me, and asked,—

"Did I do wrong, Sophia?"

"You did very right," said I, as I pressed her hand.

"But I was certainly too violent, too severe?"

"No; but if you think so, say in a while a word of explanation to the young man."

"Yes, I have been thinking so myself," replied Selma.

An old gentleman, who during the game had distinguished himself by his cheerful participation and liveliness, came diffidently and seated himself near us, and said gaily,—

"It is quite pleasant to be made so cheerful here. When one becomes old and heavy, and all is still around one, then one feels oneself

often so stupified, so deadened, that one is ready to think 'it is all over with thee, thou poor simpleton, over, quite over.' But if it happen that one becomes shook up or animated, then one can see that it is not quite so over. Nay, there is so much which can awaken anew in us and revive, that one must be as much pleased as one is amazed to think 'O that thou shouldst still be so young and so full of life.'"

Upon this I made the wise remark, that this might prove that in truth the soul preserves her entirely fresh life, although during the evening twilight, as we call 'age,' it slumbers a while.

The old man smiled, and replied, "how lovely she is. It can really do good to an old heart to look at her, and also to talk with her."

As methought that these words were a little incongruous as an answer to my observation, I looked at the old gentleman with astonishment, and remarked that he had riveted his eyes with a bright expression upon Selma, who, in order to redeem a forfeit, was sentenced "to stand a statue," and who stood the test in the most charming manner. While I now, together with my neighbour, silently observed her, I perceived St. Orme's voice. He had, in his customary soft, almost sneaking manner, seated himself near me, while he, with an expression of melancholy very uncommon to him, said,

"Do you remember my late wife——Virginia?"

"Yes," I replied; "she was one of the loveliest women that I have ever seen."

"Think you not that Selma has a resemblance to her—less in the features than in expression, and in the whole being; for example, in the proud and yet charming; in the union of the princess and sylph; in that which is in the highest sense MAIDENLY? And her voice! she often recalls the voice—which is silent for ever."

Such words from St. Orme! I looked at him surprised, but he seemed to have forgotten me and every thing around him, sunk silently in sorrowful remembrance.

Why have I felt myself from the beginning so much excited against St. Orme? Why have I not thought of seeking out the good in him? At this moment his whole being seemed to me ennobled.

Were but human beings always that which they are in their best moments, then should we know here already on earth a kingdom of heaven, of beauty, and goodness. But—!

The redeeming of the forfeits, in which song and dance were brought forward, lasted till supper.

After supper I saw Selma slowly make her way to the window where Krusenberg stood. A little while afterwards she came to me, and whispered joyfully—

"Now have I concluded peace with Krusenberg."

"And what said you to him?"

"I prayed him to pardon my warmth towards him, but said to him at the same time what a painful feeling he had occasioned me, and—in a word, I was friendly and candid towards him."

"Well, and what said he?"

"He—what do you mean? He thanked me and confessed his error, his thoughtlessness; nay, he charged himself with so many faults, that I was a little bit afraid of listening to him. But, Sophia, how much good there is in people."

"Yes, now! is not that my everlasting sermon? But one must also be careful to call it forth. As one calls into the wood, so is it answered back again."

And these were our '*faits et gestes*,' on this day, whose memorandum I may not however close, without adding to it the 'honourable mention' which, at the end of the day, my stepmother made of my good deportment, of my looks, and my toilet. The latter part lost itself in the following agreeable '*clairobscure*,' "and in that dress—with thy beautiful white arms, and pearls in thy brown hair, and with all this, there—thou didst not look as if thou wert above twenty—and so '*distingué!*' and I assure thee, that more than one—um, um, um!"

I (modest and half curious to hear more).—"O my sweet mother!"

My Stepmother.—"Um! um! um! I say nothing, as long—um! um! um!" * * *

The 28th of December.

FRAGMENTS OF A CONVERSATION.

"But tell me, Selma, how shall I explain to myself Flora's position between Lennartson and St. Orme? She really loves the first, and is betrothed to him, and yet the latter has a wonderful power over her. And she—how unequal and strange she is towards him. Sometimes she appears coquettish, sometimes afraid of him; and at times almost hostile, then again submissive, nay humble; then again proud—what indeed can be the ground of all this?"

Selma (with a sort of anxiety).—"Ah, ask me not! I know not, I understand not how that is but this I know, that Flora, since St. Orme's arrival, has been quite changed. Her temper has never been equal, and her lively imagination has always led her to fly from one object to another; but still she was in all so charming, so pleasant, so amiable."

I.—"How long has Lennartson been betrothed to Flora?"

Selma.—"Rather more than a year. It occurred at the death-bed of her mother. But I know not why, after that, her betrothal was not made known. Old General Lennartson about that time had a paralytic stroke, and his son went abroad with him in hopes of re-establishing his father's health. When Lennartson, a few months ago, returned alone, St. Orme was already here, and Flora changed. But she herself will neither speak of this, nor hear it spoken of. And truly this conduct which now prevails must soon change. It seems to me so unnatural. I hope much from the New-Year and its power. Do you see how Mathilde, between King Hiskia and Lord Wellington reddens already! And here King Ahasuerus begins to open his bright-blue eyes. How pleasant it will be to see all these in full bloom!"

Thus my young sister sought to escape from a subject which grieved her, and to forget amid bright pictures the dark ones. But the dark ones must not be so overlooked, they must be penetrated—made transparent if possible. I mean after this to keep my eyes well open.

The 1st of January, 18—

A bouquet of fresh flowers, and a cordial hand-pressure from the Viking——is the glad impression which I have derived from the forenoon visits

In the Evening.

Ready-dressed for the Exchange Ball, in black, with lace; pearls in my hair, on my neck and arms.

Be quiet, Selma dear!——Thou shouldst not make me vain! Thou shouldst not mislead thy elder sister.

Flora goes with 'the Beauty' to the Exchange, and makes her toilet with her. I am not in good spirits, and I fancy that I shall have no pleasure. But still, however, a quiet observer need not experience any annoyance, when she herself will not play any part. It is now more than ten years since I saw the world in a New-Year's Assembly in Stockholm. How will it now appear to me? '*Allons et voyons!*'

The 2nd.

Let us now relate something of the Exchange Ball. When we entered the large, magnificently-lighted saloon (we came rather late), the upper, that is to say, the aristocratic part, was filled. My stepmother nevertheless steered our way there, and said cheerfully to us, 'O we certainly shall find seats!' But the 'honourables' sate like stone-houses on their seats; and at Selma's earnest and whispered prayers her mother desisted from all attempts to unsettle these ladies. Thus we described, with all dignity, a half-circle; and amid the most courteous greetings, we made our retreat towards the lower regions of the saloon, where we obtained places near the door. Now entered Count Gyllenlöf's brilliant group, accompanied by the Silfverling family. As they paused for a moment at the entrance, in order to obtain a view of the saloon, my stepmother arose to speak to the Countess, but she turned herself away with a short and cold salutation, and then floated past us with her splendid train, which seemed not to observe us the very least in the world. My stepmother seated herself, evidently mortified and wounded. Selma was so too, for her mother's sake, and said in a tone of vexation, "How stupid they are!"

A comet-like appearance now suddenly moved through the room. It was Flora and her sister, accompanied by gentlemen. They were both of them dazzlingly beautiful, and dressed with the utmost elegance. Flora nodded gaily to us, and followed her sister up the room, where they found places near the Gyllenlöfs, who had taken seats near the platform, which was arranged for the royal family. Selma looked after Flora, and tears came involuntarily into her eyes. We sate tolerably forlorn, among quite unknown people. My stepmother looked quite troubled, and I felt myself really depressed for her sake. Then my young sister took heart, and began to introduce to me, in her lively manner, those who were arriving and those who had already arrived. My stepmother on this cheered up, and was challenged by me to shew now also her great knowledge of the world and of mankind.

In the mean time we fell into discourse with a charming young girl, who appeared very zealous to learn something of the great world about her, which she now saw for the first time. This charming young person amused us with her liveliness, and the naive candour with which she communicated to us her great fear that this evening she should not dance a single dance, as she had scarcely any acquaintance here, and besides this, was so strange and so bashful in the world, and so on. She would however console herself for sitting the whole evening, if she could only see the royal family; but somebody had just now told her that perhaps they might not be at the ball. And she had promised her little sisters to wake them when she came home, and tell them about the princess and the young princes. Her fear was soon changed into the most lively delight, as the royal chamberlains shewed themselves, and every body in the saloon rose to salute the Queen, who, with the Crown-prince, the Crown-princess, and the two eldest princes, Carl and Gustav, accompanied by a brilliant train, entered the saloon, and amid kindly greetings went across the room, to take their seats on the platform. And now we rejoiced ourselves, Selma and I, to have been near the door, where we could observe the royal family so well.

Selma's new little friend was quite charmed, and gave her heart immediately to the Prince Gustav; whilst Selma said, jestingly, that she had chosen Prince Carl for the favourite of her heart.

Scarcely had the royal family seated themselves, when the Gyllenlöf's party fell into conversation with the royal attendants. Young Silfverling paid attention to the young ladies of the court.

Slowly now began the quadrille to form itself at the upper end of the saloon. The royal chamberlains had gone round, and given out gracious invitations in the name of the illustrious guests. Now the Crown-princess, majestic and glittering with jewels, was seen to open the quadrille with Baker N., a little, stout old man, whose good-tempered polite behaviour shews how easily true moral education effaces every distinction in all, even in the greatest difference of ranks.

The Crown-prince danced with a young lady of the citizen class; and Prince Carl with ——, our little new friend, who had feared so much that this evening she should not dance at all, and who now, on the hand of the young prince, beamed with the charm of youth and innocent lovely delight.

She was pointed out as the eldest daughter of the wholesale dealer M——. In my own mind I saw her thinking, 'what will my sisters say to this?'

Lennartson danced with Flora, Selma with Felix Delphin; and as I now saw my stepmother again more satisfied and drawn into conversation by a lady of condition, I began to use more freely my eyes and ears, that I might seize upon and collect whatever the occasion offered.

The ball was beautiful; the world, thought I, tolerably like what I had seen it almost a dozen years before; old acquaintance were, for the most part, like themselves also. Time had merely wandered with light footsteps over most countenances, and had dug in a few wrinkles. Upon two faces only with which I was acquainted, I saw written a marked history—a development; the one for good, and the other for bad. For the rest, I saw many agreeable forms among the young of both sexes. People say that ugliness and stupidity vanish more and more out of the world. Good luck to the journey!

To the right of me I heard the two young Brevanders in quiet conversation together, and heard one of them say,—

"No! a thousand devils take and broil me—"

And the other replied,—

"O! the devil fetch me! the devil in hell fetch me!"

And the first continued,—

"No, seven thousand tuns curse my soul!"

And the other chimed in,—

"Yes, the devil fetch and govern me!"

An old, well-dressed gentleman, with a somewhat sarcastic look, now came up to the speakers, and wished them, with a smile, 'good speed.'

On my left hand I heard Hilda and Tilda Engel talking about the gentlemen who had just been conversing, thus. Hilda said,—

"Ah! he is so sweet, Axel Brevander, with his handsome eyes and his little pointed beard. Heavens! how sweet he is!"

Tilda. "And his brother there! he is according to my taste no less sweet. And how he waltzes! Quite divine! He has engaged me for the second waltz! Ah! he is such a sweet fellow!"

Hilda and Tilda together. "Ah, they are so sweet, so sweet, so sweet!"

Oh! thought I, we have not yet got rid of the ugly and the stupid!

I was interrupted in my observations by a middle-aged lady of a lively and goodly exterior, who saluted me with a friendly zeal, and taking my hand, exclaimed,—

"Ah! my best Mada — Miss—Mrs.—pardon me; I have forgotten the title. I wish you a good new year! How charming it is to see Mada—Miss—home again. And how may be the sweet Lady-District-Governess—I mean Miss—I mean your Honour's Lady stepmother?" I was conscious that I very well knew the person who thus addressed me, but I could not at the moment recal to mind either her name or rank, and therefore, in consequence of the incomprehensible etiquette of our social intercourse, I found it impossible to address her as *you* or *she*. I was therefore in the greatest perplexity, as she seemed so certain of our perfect acquaintance. Whilst I secretly vexed myself about this defect and bad custom among us, I seized upon, as it seemed to me, the brilliant idea of calling my unknown acquaintance 'Your honour.' At this she looked somewhat confounded, and our conversation fell, as it were, to the ground, till the Signora Luna, who had now finished her attendance on the Queen, came to us, and after having given me a hearty shake of the hand, addressed my great personage thus: "Ah, good day to you, Provostess R.! A good new year to you! How is the Provost?"

"I thank you, my gracious Barone—or Countess, who are so good as to ask. I hope the Baro—I would say Count—pardon me, I am so unlucky as never to remember titles and names. Is it not Countess that I should say?"

"Could we not simply address one another as *you?*" asked Signora Luna, smiling, "we then should get rid of a deal of embarrassment; and, as you know, Kellgren says, 'the simpler the better.'"

"Ah, if that could but be!" exclaimed the Provostess, brightening up, "that would really be a blessed thing! For me especially, who have so wretched a memory and am so mortified to be discourteous. But could one really do so?"

"I see nothing in the world which can hinder it," answered 'our lady of the bright eyes,' "if we the Provostesses, the Baronesses, the Countesses, and ladies of all degrees, determined to carry it through. For you know, indeed, that God wills what the women will. Is it not so, my best Chief Master of the Ceremonies?" continued she, turning herself to the ornate old gentleman just mentioned, "does it not seem to you, Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies, that Mr., the Chief Master of the Ceremonies himself, and we all should have an easier life of it here in Sweden, if we, like all polished nations, availed ourselves of the manner of addressing one another which our language offers us; if we employed our honest Swedish *you*, instead of these everlasting titles? It actually frightens me from talking with the 'Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies,' when I bethink me that I must address Mr. the Chief Master of the Ceremonies with the title of Mr. the Chief Master of the Ceremonies, and that it can return every minute and hinders all that which these Masters of the Ceremonies ought to do for my tongue and my meaning. And now I promise to talk no more with a Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies, unless the Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies gives me leave to address the Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies with a simple *you*, and that I can hear the Mr. Chief Master of the Ceremonies address me in the same style."

"You are perfectly right, my gracious one," smilingly replied the polite old gentleman, "and if you can make your proposition general amongst mankind, you will have rendered a great service to Sweden. I really cannot conceive why at Court and in society we should be less European than in the Swedish academy, where we with the greatest freedom address each other with *you*, a word which is of equally good tone and has an equally fine sound as the Frenchman's *vous*, the Englishman's *you*, the German's *sie*, and the *de* of our Scandinavian brothers."

"That is excellent!" exclaimed Signora Luna. "Thus then we make a contract on this New Year's-day to introduce *you* into our social and every-day life, and a new and better time shall thereby arrive, both for speech and writing in Sweden. Let me now present to you these two ladies, my very good friends; I do not tell you whether they be ladies or Mrs. only, but that they are very charming people, and you shall address them with *you*, and they shall address you with *you* likewise. Now I leave you to make a nearer relationship through pro and con."

And we talked together, and it went off both easily and well. The nimble and the light in our new nomenclature, as it were, gave wings to the conversation, and I found the Chief Master of the Ceremonies one of the most interesting old gentlemen and the Provostess one of the most excellent and most lively Provostesses in the world.

The dancing in the mean time went on, but as is usual at these New-Year assemblies, without any particular life. People collect here rather to see and be seen; rather to greet one another with 'a happy New Year!' and to chatter with one another, rather than to dance. Towards eleven the royal party went out into the large ante-room on the right, to receive and to reply to the compliments of the diplomatic corps. When they again entered the saloon they began to make the great round of it, and I actually pitied them for the many unmeaning words which they must address to and hear from the many hundreds of people unknown to

them. Yet the procession was beautiful and splendid to look at. The gorgeous dress of the Queen (she was almost covered with jewels) and her courteous demeanour occasioned deep bows and curtseys; people looked up with so much pleasure to the high and noble figures of the Crown-princess and her husband, and nobody noticed without joy and hope, the two young tall-grown slender princes; the one so brown and manly, the other fair and mild, and both with the bloom of unspoiled youth upon their fresh countenances.

My eye, however, riveted itself especially upon the Crown-princess. I remember so well how I saw her twenty years ago make her entry as bride into Stockholm; how I saw her sitting in the gilded coach with transparent glass windows; the delicate figure in a dress of silver gauze, a crown of jewels on her head, with cheeks so rosy and eyes so heavenly blue, so beaming, greeting the people who filled the streets and houses, and thronged themselves around her carriage, and with an unceasing peel of shouted huzzas saluted in her the young lovely hope of the country. She was the sun of all eyes, and the sun of heaven looked out in pomp above her. Certainly, the heart of the young princess must have beaten high at this universal homage of love and joy—at this triumphal procession into the country—into the hearts of the people. Life has not many moments of such intense splendour.

Signora Luna has told me, that when towards the end of the procession through the city, the princely bride came before the royal castle, and the carriage drove thundering through the high arched gateway, she suddenly bowed her head. When she raised it again her eyes were full of tears—with still devotion entered she her future habitation.

I thought of all this as the royal train approached us by degrees. I thought how the hopes which the young princess had then awakened, were fulfilled; how her life since then had passed; thought how she had worked on in quiet greatness, as wife and mother—as the protectress of noble manners—as the promoter of industry—as the helper of the poor and suffering; as she now stood there an honour to her religion, to the land where she was born—to the people who now called her theirs,—and I loved and honoured her from the depths of my heart. I thought that I saw in her large expressive eyes that she felt the annoyance of the empty speeches which she had to make and to hear, and it seemed to me absurd, that merely for the sake of etiquette, that not one cordial word should this evening reach her ear. I therefore let my heart emancipate itself, and greeted her with a 'God bless your Highness!' The large eyes looked at me with some amazement, which however now took a colouring of friendship, as she, pleasantly greeting us, past by and paused at Selma, whom she knew, and with whom she spoke with the utmost familiarity for some time, pleased, as it seemed, with the graceful and easy manner of my young sister. The Queen and my stepmother spoke French together, as if they had been youthful acquaintance. The Crown-prince talked with Lennartson, who now for some time had joined himself to us. All this produced a somewhat important halt of the royal train, and its delay with us drew all eyes, with a certain curiosity, upon us. Scarcely had the royal party left us when the Gyllenlöfs, as if struck by a sudden light, hastened up to us with the warmest friendship, and invited us at last to join their party. Seats were procured for us near the platform; we must of necessity follow them up the saloon. My stepmother, always soon reconciled, allowed herself to be persuaded; we went—we arrived—the Silfverlings found us to be their equals, and we had seats. My stepmother had a deal of politeness and many welcomes to answer. Selma declined three invitations to dance with the young Silfverlings, and I now understood what she meant by spasmodic acquaintances.

Shortly afterwards, when the royal party had left the assembly, we left it also. The unfortunate philosopher had forgotten Flora's over-shoes, at which Flora was very angry and unhappy. Selma prayed her warmly to take hers, and Flora did so after some opposition. Lennartson seemed hurt and displeased at this; my stepmother uneasy. Contrary to all my prayers, I could not induce Selma to make use of mine.

We were kept for a good while standing in the lobby by the crush of people. Lennartson threw his cloak before Selma's feet, and obliged her to set them upon it, that she might not suffer from standing upon the cold floor. His anxiety called forth the hateful, envious expression into Flora's eyes. St. Orme observed her quite calmly, while he shewed himself very polite towards her. He gave her his arm, Lennartson conducted my stepmother, the Chamberlain me. Here came we in collision with Aunt Pendelfelt, who, in an affected and formal manner, said half-aloud to Flora—

"Now, my sweet friend, when may one congratulate you, if I may ask?"

Flora assumed an astonished and unfriendly look—but St. Orme answered laughing; "quite certainly in the next new year!" Lennartson on this, looked at him with an inquiring and sharp glance. St. Orme looked another way. Flora seemed to set her teeth together. Aunt Pendelfelt turned herself now to Selma and Felix, as it seemed, with a similar question, which Selma sought earnestly to avoid, and begged Felix to go forward. At that moment the throng of people opened itself, and we were at liberty. In the carriage, my stepmother and I emulated each other in wrapping Selma's feet up in our shawls and cloaks.

At home, and during a light supper, we were all again in good humour, and amused ourselves with projecting all kinds of improbable plans for the future. We laughed a deal; but at a whisper of St. Orme's, Flora became suddenly gloomy and grave. At the same time I was aware of telegraphic signs between my uncle and my stepmother, which put me somwhat out of temper, and as we were about to part on this first day of the year, several of us were something out of humour; but Selma, good and joyous, and full of joke, prevented all vexatious stiffness, and amid merry "happy wishes," we said to each other "good night!"

And thus is it in our life—in our home here in the North we live much with, and among one another, where not unfrequently the unfriendly is excited, we are disturbed and put into "ill humour," and must endeavour again to heal this at home and in ourselves; since we do not here find this out of ourselves, as in the rich South. Therefore it is so beautiful, when a tone of love and joy goes through the house like a key-note.

Then the dissonances die away by degrees, and we can say in peace to one another and to life—"Good night!"

The 7th.

Good morning, life! A lovely, bright day; snow lies upon the southern mountains, and shines dazzlingly white against the clear blue horizon. Yet it is not very cold, and the sun bathes with a flood of light, palaces and cottages, waves and shore, men, animals, and statues. Sea-swallows, shining white, swing themselves over the Nordstream, where the water of the lake, with its thirteen hundred islands, breaks into the salt sea, and foamingly intermingles with its waters.

This stream plays a part in my life. Its roaring is my cradle song of an evening, when I rest upon my bed. In the morning it affords me my bathing water, and, by its wild fresh odour, by its strengthening cold, awakens feelings of the life by the Kautua stream; feelings fresh with youth, full of life's enjoyment. In its voyaging waves I see the first glimmer of light, when I from my window salute the new day.

Light! water! these primeval gifts of the Creator to earth, which still to-day are here for all mankind. Why do we not acknowledge more your power of blessing? Why are we not baptized every day by you to new life, and courage, and gratitude?

I have stood at my open window, and with full respiration have drunk in the fresh air, which, together with the sunshine, streams into my chamber. I have had joyful thoughts.

I remember the Polish nobles, who in the past summer visited Sweden, and what was their peculiar feeling of esteem for this country.

"A country never conquered by a foreign power; a people who through their own strength have asserted their own independence!" said they, with an expression of pleasure and melancholy, (melancholy over their own poor fatherland.) And I softly sang from Malmström's beautiful warm song, "The Fatherland," words which often come into my thoughts, and sang them with love.

> Thou poor, thou sterile Swedish earth,
> Shall famine cast thee down?
> * * * *
> Thou honour-crowned Fatherland,
> Where old sea-marks abide;
> Thou lofty cliff-encircled strand,
> Washed by the faithful tide.—
> Thou joyous home, thou peaceful shore,
> God stretched in love and pleasure o'er
> Thee his Almighty hand!

I thought also on my own, now so happy independence. O freedom! how charming is the enjoyment of thee after long years of captivity.

Thus thought I on something which is dear to me, and which remains ever more sure. I feel that I am come into an ever-improving, a more and more harmonious relationship to my fellow-creatures. Since it has become light in my own soul, and I am by this means come more "into equipoise" in life; since I am at peace with myself; no longer hotly wishing to please others, and no longer seeking so much for their approbation and their love—since that time I please them much more, and find in them much greater pleasure. Since I have, above all things, seen both in man and woman———human kind, and to this have spoken, I have towards mankind, and mankind has towards me, a certain *thou* affinity of feeling, a certain relationship, as of the children of one parent, which has opened our souls to each other, and has beautified life. In one word, I acknowledge ever more intelligibly that human love is my proposition.

Two people come in this way nearer and nearer to my heart, Selma and Wilhelm Brenner, my young sister and—my friend. Selma makes me happy by her tenderness, by her joyous harmonious being. She has at once laid aside the scornful mask, which disfigured her pure features, and her natural wit appears to me on that account only the more agreeable. Satire may play even upon the lips of an angel, and even the merry and witty may be hand-maids in the house of our Lord. Does He not let this be seen in nature? Scatters He not over field and wave, among clouds and stars, millions of joyful sallies and rich bursts of laughter, which lighten forth both in sunny and gloomy hours, and enliven the spirits of his creatures?

Wilhelm Brenner, the Viking——why do I feel at thoughts of him as it were a sunshine in my heart? Love, however, it is not, that I know decidedly; but my acquaintance with him gives me joy.

Latterly I have often seen him, and feel myself always well in mood when I am near him. I talk to him willingly of my Finnish fatherland; of the wild natural characteristics of Aura; of its peculiar people and manners; its strange mythological songs and legends, with magic arts and powerful PRIMEVAL WORDS—the keys to the being of things—of my own first childhood on its foaming pearl-rich streams, in the shade of its alders.

How kindly, nay, how willingly he listens to me; how well he replies to my thoughts, my feelings—now seriously, now gently jesting! Many times I request that he should call forth some remembrances out of his restless life, pictures of another climate, of seas and wildernesses, of glowing Africa and strange Egypt; scenes from the battle-fields around Atlas. It is rare that he will relate anything of this; but how curiously and desiringly do I not then listen! These pictures are so grand, and I acknowledge something grand also in the nature which has conceived them.

And what feeling is it indeed which leads the Viking to seek so openly and so cordially intercourse with me? Love? No! I do not think so; and will not think so; at least not in the sense in which people generally accept this word. The tolerably current pretence, that man and woman only under the influence of this feeling approach one another cordially, is not just. They seek, they need one another because they admire a peculiar kind of excellence in each other. He finds in her the inspirations of life, she sees her world illuminated in him; and thus they find, through one another, the harmony of life, the fulness of life.

This I have thought to-day by my clear heaven, by clear, fresh air.

The horizon of the family has exhibited itself to the New Year pretty free from clouds. My stepmother is entirely in good humour amid a host of New-Year's visits, which drop in every day. This has prevented her and me from clashing together in any important quarrel; yet since the emancipation-question we have been rather more ceremonious towards each other, and my stepmother seems to suspect tricks and uneasy machinations under many of my entirely innocent assertions.

The 11th.

St. Orme comes hither sometimes early in the morning, and desires to speak alone with my stepmother. She always looks disturbed at this; and when she returns from these conferences, she is always annoyed and uneasy till some new impression removes this. I suspect that their private conversations have reference to money which St. Orme borrows. May the good-nature of my stepmother not bring her into embarrassment. I have heard that which is bad spoken of St. Orme's affairs, of his life and connexions. Felix also may be misled by St. Orme's sophisms, and by the example of his friends, the Rutchenfelts, into evil ways. I have spoken with Brenner of my suspicions respecting St. Orme; but the Viking takes the field for him, and is, since his residence in Paris, under obligations to him, which makes him unwilling to believe anything bad about him.

The 13th.

My bad suspicions have their entirely good, or I will say, bad foundation. Helfrid Rittersvärd wrote a note to Selma this morning, wherein she asked a loan of fifty rix-dollars. She needed this sum, in order to pay the pension of her youngest brother, and should be able to repay it in two months. With eyes flashing with desire to gratify Helfrid's wish, Selma shewed the letter to her mother, and prayed her to advance the desired sum, which she had not now herself.

"With infinite pleasure, my beloved child!" exclaimed my stepmother, who is always ready to give; hastened to her writing-desk, and opened the drawer where she usually keeps money; but suddenly she appeared to recollect something, and turned pale. She took out a purse, which a few days before was full of heavy silver-pieces, put in her hand instinctively, but drew out merely a few rix-dollars. A painful confusion painted itself on her countenance, as she said almost stammering, "Ah! I have not—I cannot now! St. Orme has borrowed all my money. He promised to bring it me back again in a few days, but—in the mean time—how shall we manage it?"

My stepmother had tears in her eyes; and her troubled appearance, her pale cheeks—I sprang immediately up to my chamber, and came down again quickly with a few *canary-birds* (so my stepmother and Selma in their merry way, call the large yellow bank-bills; whilst the others, just according to their look, and their value, have the names of other birds).

Selma embraced me, and danced for joy at the sight of the yellow notes. But my stepmother took them with a kind of embarrassment—a dissatisfied condescension, which somewhat grieved me. She promised that I should soon receive back the bills. And if I "must borrow from her, I might be sure that," and so on.

Her coldness cooled me. In the mean time we governed the state together in the afternoon, and handled 'the system,' and other important things, I will not venture to say exactly according to what system, if not—according to the system of confusion. My thoughts were in another direction. They followed Felix and Selma. He seemed to wish to speak to her alone, and she seemed on the contrary to wish to avoid him, in which also she succeeded.

The 15th.

To-day Felix came hither early in the forenoon. I was alone with Selma, in the inner ante-room. She was attending to her flowers at the window. After a conversation of a few minutes with me, Felix approached her. Selma went to the other window; Felix followed. Selma would have escaped into the other room, when Felix placing himself in the door-way, barred her progress and exclaimed beseechingly,

"No! now Selma can no longer avoid me! Give me a moment's conversation, if you do not wish that I should be altogether desperate."

A deep crimson overspread Selma's countenance; a feeling of anguish seemed to seize upon her soul! but she struggled with herself, and whilst she looked down at a monthly rose, which she held in her hand, she seemed to wait for that which Felix had to say to her. I thought I saw that I ought to go, and leave the two young people to explain themselves to each other, and—I went, but not without secret disquiet.

In the saloon I found my stepmother in secret conference with the Chamberlain. She looked more Metternich-like than ever. I made as though I noticed nothing, and went up to my chamber, when I soon received a visit from Helfrid Rittersvärd. And out of this visit came quite unexpectedly a confidence which——Now, now, my gracious diplomatic Lady Stepmother, I can also have my state secrets. To my Diary, however, I can very well confide, that Helfrid Rittersvärd, after much consideration and after much anxiety and pain, had yielded to the faithful devotion and prayers of Ake Sparrsköld, and had promised to belong to him whenever their personal circumstances allow of a union. This may, it is true, withdraw itself to a great distance. Before Sparrsköld gets his company it is not to be thought of, and Captain Rumler, his superior, remains probably yet a long time in his post as head of the company.

Helfrid was uneasy, and wished to know from me whether she had done well or ill. I said 'well," and that made her happy.

It was two hours before I could again visit Selma. As I came into the ante-room where I had left her, it was empty, but I saw that some one had lain upon the sofa, and had supported their head upon the soft pillow. I picked up a few fallen rose-leaves, and saw in their bright-red bosom shining tears. Uneasy in mind, I went farther and sought for Selma. I found her in her chamber.

Her eyes gleamed as they were wont to do when she weeps, and sighs heaved her breast. She soon opened her heart to my tenderly-anxious questions, and I learned her secret feelings and thoughts.

Felix had reproached Selma with the coolness and unfriendliness which she had shewn to him for some time; had told her that this made him unhappy, that he should be lost if she were not different towards him. He confessed his weakness of character—his folly—but Selma could save him if she would, could make of him a worthy, happy man. He prayed that she would confer her hand upon him, and make that reality at which they had so long played. As Selma's husband Felix would be quite another kind of person. "Ah!" continued Selma, "he spoke so beautifully and so warmly of that which I might be to him, and of what he himself could and would be, that I had not the heart to withstand his prayers and promises. But I set fast a time of trial for him, after which——I have always

liked Felix; he has a good heart, and so many amiable qualities; but he is weak, and for some years, since he has been of age, he has shewn himself so trifling, so little to be trusted!—We have been so dissatisfied with him. But he can change, he can become better, and then—"

"Then you will make him happy, Selma?"

"Yes!"

"And you weep?"

"Yes! I know not why."

"I do not believe it of Felix, that he would, as it were, take your feelings by storm."

"Oh, that he certainly will not. But he thinks, perhaps, that I love him more than I really do: and that only temper in me, or his fickle behaviour occasioned my coolness. From our childhood upwards it has been a sort of understood thing in our families, that we were to be married, and we were looked upon as almost betrothed. Felix has always wished for this union, my mother the same, and I have had nothing against it till I learned to become better acquainted with myself. I now know very well that I can never love Felix properly, because I cannot highly esteem him, as I will and must highly esteem my husband; but—"

"But what, my sweet Selma?"

"If I can make him and others happy, then—neither shall I myself be unhappy. And then—God will give me, perhaps, a child, which I can love, and in which I can have pleasure in the world."

With this Selma wept quite softly, leaning on my shoulder.

I wished to know what Selma had actually promised to young Delphin.

"I have prayed him," replied she, "for one whole year not to speak of his love, but to prove it to me in actions and behaviour. Should I be in this manner convinced that his inclination towards me is actually as great as he says, then I will, when the year of trial is over, consent to be his bride. That I have promised. Felix desires now nothing more; he prayed only for a ring, which he might wear on his hand as a memorial of this hour and of his promise. I gave him the ring with the sapphire. He was so happy, so glad! Ah, Sophia! I must be happy too, since I have done that which is right, and have perhaps saved a human being."

And again Selma's eyes beamed with pure joy, although through a haze of tears. I rejoiced heartily in her prudence and goodness, but still felt myself quite melancholy on her account.

The 18th.

"Invited out for the whole week!" With these words my stepmother met me this morning, and her countenance shewed an intelligible pleasure through an assumed light veil of well-bred weariness and tedium of the world! I exhibited not the least sorrow, especially as I saw my stepmother and the two young girls taken up in the highest degree with the thoughts and business of the toilet. I feel myself fortunate to escape these molestations, and that I can stay at home. My stepmother persuaded me, indeed, a very little "to go with them." But it is not in right earnest.

The 21st.

Among all these dissipations, which reign in the house; amid all those beautiful toilets and artificial flowers, and all these so-called pleasures, still strange symptoms break forth, which testify of the volcanic soil upon which they dance.

Flora has been for several days as changeable in her temper as in her dress; and it has seemed to me, as if she by these changes endeavoured merely to fetter Lennartson's attention, or more correctly, to charm him, and his eye follows her too with attention, but rather with the gravity of the observer than with the expression of the enraptured lover. It seems to me sometimes, as if with all these changes of Flora's, he asked, 'which is the true?' and so ask I also; because, whilst she evidently endeavours to draw Lennartson to herself, she disdains not several by-conquests, and keeps these up also with her charms and her endeavours. St. Orme plays the while an apparently indifferent part, but is often betrayed by his crafty glance. He watches her secretly.

Among the pictures in the inner ante-room, there is a beautiful portrait of Beatrice Cenci, the unfortunate fratricide. To-day Flora stood before it, and observed it long, sunk in silent thought. I looked at her, for she was beautiful, as she stood there with an Undine-garland of coral and white water-lilies in her brown hair, and in a dress of that chameleon-like changing-coloured material, which in this year is so much the mode. All at once she broke silence, and said—

"Can you tell me, wise Philosophia! why I find pleasure in this picture; in studying this Beatrice Cenci?"

"Probably because she is so touchingly beautiful," said I.

"No! but for this, because she was so firm and determined. Such people refresh the mind—especially, when we are disgusted by the undecided, weak, characterless people, who are now so abundant in the world. What think you of Beatrice?"

"I deplore her from my whole heart. It must be horrible to hate the author of one's own life."

"Yes, indeed, horrible!" interrupted Flora warmly. "Yes, it is horrible to hate one's parents, but horrible also, if one were compelled to despise them."

Flora with this hid her face in her hands. I looked at her with astonishment and sympathy.

"Ah!" continued she with excitement, "let no one say that it is a matter of indifference what song is sung beside a child's cradle; it sounds through his whole life. Lennartson, Selma, why are they so good, so wholly good; and I, why am I so?—And yet,—Sophia! I am no ordinary person!"

I was silent, and Flora continued, while she looked sharply at me,—

"I know that you never can like me, and that you never did me justice, but still you will not say that I am an *ordinary* person."

"Extraordinary and beautifully gifted are you in all things," replied I, "but perhaps you are in reality less extraordinary than you fancy yourself to be. For the rest, dear Flora, I cannot judge you, because I do not yet know you. You are often so unlike yourself—you are, as if you were not one, but two—nay, several persons."

"Nor am I *one* person!" replied Flora; "I have a double being, one good, and one bad, that always casts its spells around me; that is my other I, and follows me like my shadow, and places itself between me and all truth, by day and by night; abroad and at home; when I laugh and when I weep; at the ball and in the church,—yes, even in church it places itself be-

tween me and heaven! How is it then possible that I can have peace—that I can be saved? Ah! would that I were a little grey sparrow of the field?"

"And why a sparrow?" asked I.

"Because then nobody would trouble themselves about me, and would know nothing of me——But hush! I feel in me that one of my bad demons is near!"

"Let him obtain no power over you!" prayed I warmly and zealously.

"He has power!" said Flora, with a horrible expression, "and I stand on the brink of an abyss! and soon—soon enough shall I be precipitated down, if not——" she was silent; light footsteps made themselves audible in the outer ante-room, and St. Orme entered Immediately afterwards came my stepmother and Selma, and all went together to supper at the Silfverlings.

The 23d.

New and distinguishing tokens! My stepmother has her Metternich demeanour, and the telegraph movements between her and the Chamberlain go on. I suspect strongly a complot against my precious freedom. "Must go cautiously and a little diplomatically to work," I heard my stepmother say, softly, this day to my uncle; "you have not let Sophia suspect anything?"

"No; but I feel my way in a delicate manner; confide yourself to me; I understand the ladies," replied he.

To that end my stepmother plagues me with encomiums on the Chamberlain, and the Chamberlain with questions as to my taste in furniture; for example, with regard to the form of tables and bookcases, and so forth. He wishes, he says, in the furnishing of two new rooms that they should be wholly arranged according to my taste. But what is his furniture to me? If my stepmother sings my uncle's praise, he is no less generous in praise of her.

"She is one of the most superior ladies that I know," said he again to-day, "a tact, a judgment, a discretion! Ah! one can confide every thing to her; and I, for my part, when I will do a little good in secret, I know no one whom I would so willingly, and with the most perfect assurance can, make my confidant."

I began over all this to become impatient.

People talk of the marriage of Brenner with a young, lovely and rich widow. This has a little annoyed me. Benner's behaviour appears to me strange. Why has he not spoken to me of this connexion? I am his friend—his sisterly friend. And why?—I cannot endure anything enigmatical in him: but perhaps it is unjust in me so to regard it.

The 24th.

My stepmother and I are on cool terms. Her attempt to impose upon me is repulsed; I am proud, and show my sense of freedom in not a particularly amiable manner. Dissatisfied looks from Flora; uneasy and beseeching ones from Selma. General discomfort. If this should cease here, then it would be quite pleasant.

Ah! they say that life stands still if no outward circumstances excite and move it. But it is not so. It seems to me that it is in such quiet times that the angels of heaven listen to human life most attentively—for then tremble the strings in its innermost depths—then are its finest nerves developed — then fashions itself, that which increases the power of heaven or of hell.

At the moment in which the butterfly developes its wings it is quite calm in the secure resting-place which it has selected. In the moment of change its life appears altogether to be an inward one. But the beaming butterfly of day and the nocturnal death's-head moth are children of the same quiet summer-hour.

A ramble out. A hateful, disagreeable day; the people red-blue, heaven leaden-grey; icicles at all the houses; loose, trampled-up snow, half an ell deep in the streets; vexatious thoughts, unpleasing feelings! Yet—"EVEN THIS WILL PASS OVER!" was the proverb which the wise Solomon gave to an Eastern prince, who desired from him such a motto as would make the soul strong in misfortune, and humble in prosperity; and this motto will I make mine.

The 26th.

I went down yesterday to dinner with the virtuous determination of being complying towards my stepmother, and kind towards everybody. But it was the reverse with me; I entered the inner ante-room, and saw my stepmother and the Chamberlain sitting on the sofa, in confidential and whispered discourse, which they suddenly broke off on my approach. My stepmother seemed very good-humoured, and soon came up to me, and said significantly, as she arranged something in my dress, "I must tell you, that we have just had a long conversation about you and sundry of your concerns—um, um, um!"

"On what concerns?" asked I with a look as if I would not at all understand it.

"O yes, yes; about certain concerns which everywhere have their importance; um—um—um!" said my stepmother, smiling. And then she began a little speech about its being so pleasant to her to see every one about her happy; how all her thoughts and her endeavours tended to that; how she thought not all about herself, how she merely lived for others, and so on. I thought on the bitter recollections of my youth, and assumed a north-pole demeanour on the throne-speech of my stepmother.

We went to dinner. The Chamberlain was "*aux petit soins*," on my account, and divided the best morsels between himself and me, which had no relish for me. To the most polite observations of my stepmother I answered also coldly, and avoided Selma's looks, which seemed to ask, "What have we done against thee?" At dinner, youth was praised as the golden age; the Chamberlain said that he had in youth "rightly intoxicated himself from the cup of enjoyment." I said, that I had my bitterest remembrances precisely out of my youth; remembrances which even to this day operated disturbingly on my temper. I saw, by the uneasy looks of my stepmother, that she felt this as a reproof to herself. But I had the feeling as if a heavy avalanche lay upon my heart.

In the afternoon, as I was making a little collar, I expressed some vexation that I had no blond with which to trim it. My stepmother hastened instantly to her room, and soon returned with a quantity of beautiful blond, which she playfully threw round my neck, as she prayed me to accept it for love; and I felt myself clasped in her arms, felt her soft breath on my cheek, and she whispered to me archly, that "my passion for emancipation should not prevent her from holding me fast." In my present Spitbergen-mood of mind I recognised nothing in this embrace but an attempt to circumscribe

my liberty, and therefore I released myself coolly, and even threw away the blond, because "it did not suit me; I could get for myself what I wanted."

My stepmother silently went with her disdained gift back to her room; and as Selma a moment afterwards followed her, I could see, through the open door, how she leaned against the window, looked before her still and sorrowfully, and it seemed to me that tears were on her cheeks.

This sight went to my heart; and whilst I secretly reproached myself for my conduct, I went up to my chamber in order here, in quietness, to demand a reckoning with myself. But I could hardly recognise again my own room; so changed, so beautified was it. For a while I knew not where I was.

Among some handsome new furniture which had been arranged in it, shewed itself an extremely elegant mahogany bookcase, through whose bright glass windows a number of books in ornamental binding smiled upon me; and from the top looked down majestically a beautiful Minerva's head of bronze.

As an exclamation of astonishment escaped from me, I heard behind me a half-snorting, half-chirping sound, and when I turned myself round, I saw my delighted maid come forth from a window corner, when she could no longer conceal her sympathy with my amazement.

"Her Grace has long thought about this," related she now out of the fullness of her heart; "and the Chamberlain himself has had the bookcase carried up, and then Miss Selma has been here all the morning to arrange the things in order."

A revolution now took place in me. Perhaps I now saw here the aim of every private conversation, of every telegraphic movement, of every secret agreement, which, as I fancied, had been directed against my freedom. And they had reference merely to my well-being and my pleasure! Perhaps it was the thought on this my astonishment, which had made my stepmother to-day in such high spirits. I fancied that I again felt her warm embrace, her breath upon my cheeks. And I? how had I met her? how had I suspected, mistaken, rejected her, and occasioned her tears!

With the speed of lightning I hastened down to my stepmother, and here—

I have a bias of a dangerous kind. If my feelings have become ice cold, and then are suddenly thawed by a ray of sunlight or dew-drop of life, then am I unusually deluged by them as by a spring-flood, and am ready to deluge the whole world with them. Nay, there exists no person whom in such moments I could not press to my heart; and for those who are dear to me I have only one feeling, the feeling of giving them all that I have, myself into the bargain. Seneca and Cicero, and Schlegel and Hegel, and the doctrines of all the wise men of the world on self-government, and quietness and moderation, are in such moments merely like oil upon a waterfall. Certain experiences have, it is true, brought me somewhat to control this rushing flood; but in certain moments nevertheless they will have their way, and the present moment was one of them. Yes, so deeply affected was I by the goodness of my stepmother, and so full of contrition for my own injustice, that—if she now had required that I should confer my hand on the Chamberlain—I should, I think, have done it.* But thanks be to my good stars! she thought not of that; and I could undisturbedly enjoy all the amenities of life which blossomed there, where human souls overflowed in intimacy and love towards each other.

I have silently vowed by Minerva's head, never again to torment with unnecessary suspicion my stepmother and myself. I feel, therefore, a ship's load lighter at heart. I hear Selma joyfully sing. God bless the singing bird! Her song always celebrates the sunny hours of home. She resembles in this the singing birds of Sweden, who (Nilson relates in his Fauna) sing the sweetest after soft summer rain.

The 28th.

Continued rapture on my part over the bookcase, and so on. Increasing pleasure and increasing contentment on the part of my stepmother. Light on the fate of Europe, through my stepmother and me. Active trade with the Lady Councillors of commerce; one betroths, one marries, one strikes people dead; in one word, one cares for the success of the world. With all this, secret vexation in my soul. I have not seen the Viking for several days. He ought indeed, at least, to come and announce his betrothal to his friend.

The 29th.

To-day a ramble out. I met the Viking, who was angry, and quarreled because we were out exactly then; and that I, if I also had been at home, and alone, received him not. I was rather proud at this assertion, and assumed a rather frosty deportment, on which Brenner left me tolerably short and cold. Now, now,—

I care for nobody, nobody;
And nobody cares for me!

Thank God! thus can I yet sing, and thus will I ever be able to sing.

I will have no vexation, no unnecessary vexation. I have had enough of that in my life, I have had it from feelings all too warm. I will have these no more. And therefore will I remain cold and calm, as the marble statues which we shall see by wax-light in the sculpture-gallery to-night.

Eleven at night.

But when one sees between the cold marble statues and the pale flames of the waxlights a warmly-beaming human eye which rests with gentle sun-strength upon us—who can prevent the heart becoming warm and soft, prevent the gallery itself from being converted into a temple of the sun. Thus happened it to me, as in the Niobe Gallery, between Roman Emperors and Caryatides I discovered—the Viking. As I met his eye I involuntarily extended my hand, and felt at the same moment his warm, true hand-pressure. O we must still always continue friends! Brenner, however, did not join us. He seemed to have undertaken to protect two ladies, one of whom was young and very pretty. "Perhaps she is his bride," thought I. But I gave up this opinion as again and again I saw his eye between the marble statues directed to me with an expression which quietly did my heart good. The meeting of this glance, the sentiment of a deep sympathy with a warm and noble heart, gave to the ramble through this marble-hall on the arm of the Chamberlain an extraordinary charm. I felt my heart beat with

* It may be customary in Sweden for uncles to marry their nieces—we can only say, however, that it sounds very odd in English—M. H.

a full, although calm life, amid these senseless statues; and the perhaps yet less feeling crowd of people, who in elegant dresses filled the galleries, were occupied rather as it seemed to me with the lighting-up, with the handsome dresses, with the Queen and her Court (who also were there), than with the masterpieces of art. But wherefore do I blame that? I myself thought more of the people than of the statues. Lennartson gave his arm to my stepmother, and directed his words and remarks particularly to Selma, who looked lovely, but thoughtful; whilst Flora, on her brother's arm, in a kind of feverish endeavour seemed to wish by her person and her sallies to occupy all those around her. St. Orme, Baron Alexander, and a couple of other gentlemen followed her amid applause and admiration. She was very well dressed and exceedingly lovely.

In the so-called Sergel's room my attention was drawn to three different models for the artist's group of Cupid and Psyche, because we saw so plainly in it the works of a mind which clearly understood itself and possessed itself of the life which he would express. In the first model the statues are ill-shaped, coarse, unpliant, soul-less, Egyptian-mummy-like; they lock themselves together in a block-like oneness. In the next they have already life and motion; but are yet without harmony, without beauty and higher unity. These they obtain first in their third formation, when the artist has won the victory, and the splendid figures express the combat of human passions, softened by divine grandeur and beauty. Methought I saw in these forms the whole development, as in humanity so in man, and glad in these thoughts I turned myself round with the necessity of communicating them to some one, who could or would understand me. I saw now in my neighbourhood only Flora, who with an expression of impatience and also of bitterness listened to St. Orme, who spoke to her in a low voice. As my eye met that of Flora, she said, suddenly breaking off, and in a joking tone, "What revelation has Sophia had now? Her eye glows as if she had discovered a new world."

"Merely a thought," replied I, "is become clear to me here." And, carried away by my feelings, I showed to her the three model-groups, told her what they had led me to think upon the development and perfecting of life, on the patience and strength of the true artist, which never rests till it has approached its goal, nor till it sees that its work is good.

St. Orme smiled sarcastically at my enthusiasm, but Flora listened to me attentively. Afterwards she said, "Sergel was fortunate; he was not hindered like many others in his development, was not hindered in working out his own perfection by"—she checked herself, and I continued inquiringly "by?"

"By the want of a great object," continued Flora, with a strong emphasis and with a bitter expression of countenance.

But, nevertheless, I saw this with joy, for I recognised the thoughts and the expression which at times flashed forth in Flora, and made me conscious of the existence of a higher spirit in her enigmatical being.

St. Orme yawned aloud, and began a depreciating criticism of the last group, which was meant to show the folly of my admiration, the imperfection of the artist, and the superiority of his own acuteness.

To me this criticism betrayed merely St. Orme's want of a noble mind. I felt myself also wounded by his scarcely courteous manner towards me; but I am so afraid in such cases of letting myself down by repayment in like coin, or in permitting myself to be mastered by a little desire of revenge, that I listened to St. Orme in silence, without giving any sign of the displeasure which I felt. Yet I was glad to be liberated from it by the Viking, who having disposed of his ladies (God knows how), now came hastily to me in order to call my attention to the group of Oxenstjerna and History, and also to the remarkably noble and powerful countenance of the great statesman. In the joyous frank expression of Brenner, I perceived a feeling of fresh sea-air which often comes over me from this spirit. For the rest, he complained that he was wearied, that he had no taste for cold, lifeless figures.

It was nevertheless determined, that this evening the lifeless figures should reveal to me many depths of the living ones.

We were advancing to the marble gallery of Logard where Odin stands so commandingly, Endymion slumbers so sweetly, Venus jests with Love, Apollo plays upon the lyre, and all the Muses stand around him.

There the royal secretary, Von Krusenberg, joined us, who bowing ceremoniously before gods and men, thus made himself perceived by us,—

"It is certain that here one can say that one is in good company. One feels oneself really exalted by it."

"Yes," interposed Baron Alexander, "here one escapes at least the elbow-thrusts of the people; of the common herd which fills the streets and alleys."

Such expressions I cannot bear, and cannot hear them in silence. I replied therefore not quite courteously,—

"I believe certainly, that among the so-called 'people,' one meets with honester and better individuals than among the heathen divinities. There is a deal of the 'herd' upon high Olympus."

As a church-weathercock might look down upon the paving-stones, so looked down the great Alexander on me, and St. Orme said sarcastically,—

"Thus it may appear to those who do not enter into the spirit of antiquity, and do not understand how to grasp its works with an enlightened and unprejudiced eye. The Catechism is of no use here as a scale of judgment. The beautiful and the sublime must be measured by another standard."

"I think so too," said Flora. "The Grecian ideal ought not to be dragged down to the circle of our every-day virtues."

I felt that I crimsoned, for I found that I did not stand upon quite good ground against my adversary. I looked at Selma and she looked at Lennartson, and his calm glance rested upon me, with an expression which animated and strengthened me. And I was intending to reply in order to make my meaning more clear, when St. Orme continued,

"I, for my part, know not what more deserves our homage than the divine gifts of BEAUTY, GENIUS, STRENGTH! I know really nothing which can make themselves of value near them. The small, nameless, modest beings that swarm on the earth cannot do it. No! therefore I beg

to hold with the gods, or more particularly with the goddesses. With them one is always at home in a temple of beauty."

"Cultivation of Genius!" said Lennartson, smiling, "and many think that this is very sublime and genteel. But more sublime and more genteel is the cultivation which looks indifferently away from accidental, showy gifts, and inquires after merely the essential in man, the goodness and earnestness of the will; which beholds in each man an elect genius, an heir of another divine home, a living thought of God, which ennobles him for the citizenship of an eternal kingdom, and conducts him there. One may do justice to the heathen point of view, yet with all propriety find its inferiority to the very highest, that is, to *Christianity*."

This was evidently said to extricate me out of my dilemma, and it seemed to me as if the heathen divinities suddenly grew pale, or evaporated into ghostlike figures, and the great Alexander shrivelled up into a dwarf; von Krusenberg crept behind Odin, while Selma and I looked up with delight to Lennartson. St. Orme and Baron Alexander consoled themselves by communicating to each other their paltry thoughts on people who could make so much ado about an insignificant occurrence among insignificant beings, and would ascribe a world-historical signification to an event which had happened here two thousand years ago. 'How foolish!'

I listened to the two gentlemen, and wondered that *great learning* could be so completely united to great *poverty of mind*.

The truth is, that I have found among simple youths and maidens, more *deep feeling* for the deep in life, than among a certain kind of the learned.

Some time after this, we stood in the middle of the gallery, before a marble group, Cupid and Psyche. One sees Cupid about to leave Psyche in anger, who kneels and prays for forgiveness.

"How could one, like Cupid here, be so immoveable to a beautiful supplicator like Psyche?" we heard von Krusenberg say.

"Yes," said Flora, while her eye sought that of Lennartson, "is it possible to repulse her, who loves so, and prays so, even if—if—she be culpable?"

"He must be a downright barbarian!" exclaimed von Krusenberg.

"I think," said Lennartson, rather coldly, "that there are actions, which one cannot, and ought not forgive."

"Not even to a beloved one," whispered Flora, with a voice almost imperceptibly tremulous, "not even a bride—a wife?"

"Least of all her," said Lennartson mildly, but with emphasis; and with a serious penetrating look on Flora.

Shortly afterwards some one seized my arm astily, and whispered, "Come with me! I am ill!"

It was Flora; she was pale as death. But the very moment when I was about to go with her (Felix was with Selma, and did not see us), in the same moment Lennartson stood by her side, and led her out of the crowd.

"A little fresh air! I faint!" stammered Flora. Lennartson opened the doors towards the Logards terrace, and we soon saw the starry heavens above our heads, and the wind of the winter-night blew cold on our cheeks.

Lennartson ordered one of the velvet-covered benches to be brought out for Flora, gave her a glass of water to drink, and shewed her the tenderest care. I removed a few steps. The scene and the time were solemn. We stood, as it were, in the heart of the castle, whose high and gloomy walls surrounded us on three sides; the fourth opened to us the beautiful prospect over the harbour, with its wreath of mountains and inhabited islands, wholly concealed in the nocturna. twilight, lit only by the stars of heaven and the flickering lights of earth. The lights of the gallery threw broad stripes of light between the clipped trees upon the high terrace where we stood, and which were broken by the shadows of the tree-stems. I saw all this, while my ear involuntarily caught the words which were exchanged between two human beings, who seemed in this moment to approach the crisis of their strange connexion, the separating point in their lives.

I heard Lennartson ask something with a soft, almost loving voice, and Flora replied,

"Better—better *now!* O Lennartson, because thou now lookest bright and gentle, like the heavens above us, and not like the cold marble images within."

Lennartson was silent. Flora continued, with greater emotion, "Lennartson, thou art really as stern, as severe as he, as immovable as thy words sound now. Ah, my God! tell me, how am I to understand thee?"

"Flora," said Lennartson, also deeply affected, "I it is who might have asked thee this question for some time; I it is who wish to understand thee. If thou lovest me—"

"More than everything—more than life," interrupted Flora vehemently.

"Good then!" continued Lennartson, taking both her hands into his, and bending himself over them, "if it be so, then—be open, be candid towards me. Explain to me—"

"Ah! all, all, whatever thou wilt, Lennartson. But at a more suitable time. Here it is—so cold."

"Cold!" exclaimed Lennartson, "that is only an excuse. Be at least, for this once, candid, Flora. Thy hands burn. Thou feelest now no cold."

"No! my heart is warm, warm for thee, Thorsten. And therefore have patience with me. I love thee so strongly, so childishly;—yes, I am therefore afraid of thee, Lennartson; afraid of seeing thee grave and stern. Oh, if I only knew that thou rightly lovedest me, then I should not long be incomprehensible to thee! Oh say, canst thou not love me so, at least, not for my love's sake?"

Methought that loving tone of Flora's was answered. I saw Lennartson bend himself lower before her, heard—the doors of the gallery again open, and saw my stepmother, together with her party, come out, seeking uneasily for us.

On the arm of Lennartson, Flora again entered the illuminated gallery.

Had Flora now obtained a certainty from the heart of Lennartson, which she had not before; had words been spoken which my ear had not perceived, but which had loosened the bond by which Flora had been held captive? This is certain, that a bright joy seemed to have elevated her whole being. Never was she more captivating, nor had Lennartson been more captivated by her charms. Selma looked gently but pale on them both, while St. Orme regarded either with a subtly-searching glance. This glance made me suspect that Flora's romance

is still yet far from its termination, and that a new revolution may soon take place.

The 1st of February.

The revolution in Flora has taken place, and all is as dark as ever.

This forenoon I heard outside before my chamber various strange sounds, as of persons violently quarreling. I went out to see what it might be; the little passage between Flora's room and mine was empty, but the door of Flora's outer room was half open, and through this I saw, to my astonishment, Flora endeavouring to release her hands from St. Orme, who held them forcibly. Both looked up to the window by which they stood.

"Ah! let me go!" besought Flora, warmly. "Let me liberate it! It will be soon too late! See, the ugly spider has caught it already!"

"Why must it fly into the web?" said St. Orme, with his cold scorn. "Let it be. It will be interesting to see if it can liberate itself, whether it can escape. If not, then,—*laissez faire la fatalité*."

"Ah! it is already his prey! The poor wretch! Adrian, let me go!" (She stamped with her foot.) "You are a cruel, horrible man!"

"Because I will not mourn about a fly? The little fool, she has created her fate herself, and who knows whether after all she is so very unfortunate? And the spider! Who knows whether he be so cruel? He merely embraces the little fly."

At this moment a pair of fire-tongs was suddenly raised, which tore the spider's web, and separated the spider and the fly. This catastrophe was occasioned by me; I had, armed with the first best weapon which chance offered me, approached the combatants. At sight of me St. Orme released Flora and exclaimed,

"See, there comes truly, as if from heaven, a saving angel! Pity is it only, that the noble deed comes too late."

And it was too late. The fly fell dead upon the window frame.

"But," continued St. Orme, "Sophia can very well write an elegy or moral observations, and thus it may be always a means of edification, and—"

Flora sprang with her hands before her face suddenly into the inner room. I followed her, and St. Orme went away, whistling an opera air upon the steps.

Flora gave herself up to such an outbreak of violence as I had never seen before. She tore her hair, cried, and threw herself with convulsive sighs and tears on the floor. I stood amazed and silent, and looked at her. Where now was the beautiful Flora? It was a fury that I saw before me. I offered her a glass of water; she emptied it hastily, and then became by degrees somewhat calmer.

"Dearest Flora," said I at length, "why this? How can the fate of a fly thus—"

"Fly?" exclaimed Flora; "do you think that I trouble myself about this? No, I mourn over myself. I, Sophia, I am this unfortunate fly. I shall be a pray of this—and he knows it, the horrible wretch, he enjoys it; he amuses himself in seeing this image of my fate, of my anguish—the cruel one, the detestable one, who—"

"But how? but why?" asked I, interrupting the [illegible] of names which Flora gave to St. Orme.

"Inquire not!" replied she, impatiently. "I cannot say, and it would serve to no purpose. Ah! why are there not in our country those protecting institutions which Catholic countries are possessed of, where a person can escape from the world, from himself, and from others; nay, can be saved even from humiliation—where even the fallen woman, sustained by the Cross, can erect herself, and under the protection of heaven, can stand there purified and ennobled before the eyes of the world!"

And Flora was again beautiful, as she raised herself up and turned her glistening tearful eyes towards heaven. But this exaltation lasted but for a moment. Then continued she with renewed bitterness,

"And if he pursue me I will become Catholic; nay, I will become a Turk or a Fantee woman. I would adore the Virgin Mary, or Mohammed, or the Great Mogul, or the devil himself, or whatever it might be, if it would only free me from this man."

"Your call for a convent-life," said I smiling, "does not appear to me to be of the right kind. But, Flora, I imagined that you had given yourself up to a good and strong spirit, that you belonged to Thorsten Lennartson."

"Belonged? yes, with my whole soul, with my whole heart, but—"

"Why do you not turn yourself to him with open heart, with full confession? He would free you."

"So you talk! Ah, you know not—Yes, if he loved me as I love him! But—ah, if I knew, if I rightly knew! Why are there no longer oracles, no sibyls, no witches or prophetesses, in the world, to whom one might go in one's need, and from whom one could demand counsel, a hint, a glance into the future? But all that which is pleasant is dead now. How unbearable and flat and insipid is the world now, with its regularity, with its rationality. It disgusts me. I am disgusted with myself. Every thing is nauseous and unbearable to me. Do not stand and look at me, Sophia! Leave me! I will not be a spectacle for you. I know that you hate me, but now I am indeed unfortunate enough. Let me, at least, be alone!"

"No! not now. Let me rule over you a little while, Flora! You will then better understand my hatred. I am just going out. Attend me, and let me conduct you. The snow without will fall coolingly upon your hot brow."

I approached her, and began to arrange her hair.

"Do with me what you will!" said she, and remained passive. I helped her to put on her winter dress, and silently we went together out into the free air.

It snowed and blew. We went towards the lowest quay down to the river, on the way to the North Bridge. Flora looked at the foaming waves.

"How it foams! how it struggles!" said she, "see, see how the sea-waves now endeavour to heave themselves, and now are subjected from the other side, and are obliged to sink in their exasperation, because the Malar-stream proudly rushes over them. The poor waves! I should like to know whether they feel what it is so exactly to sink beneath oneself, to wrestle and to struggle, without hope of ever conquering."

"In a few days," said I, "the Malar water will perhaps have lost its power, and the combating streams will have come into equipoise."

"Sometimes," said Flora, "it also happens that the angry waves obtain the upper hand, and rush over the others, and exasperate them. There is a retaliation."

We were again silent. I led Flora over the bridge and through the streets into the city. There are the oldest memories of Stockholm; here is the heart of the Stockholm city, which also has the form of a heart; here flowed the blood of the nobles of Sweden in streams from the hand of Christiern; here the streets are narrow, the lanes dark; but here also is the Castle of Stockholm; and here lift themselves even now, a mass of houses, which show by their inscriptions cut in stone, the strong fear of God which built up in ancient times the realm of Sweden.

We went into a dark doorway, ornamented with statuary work, of one of their houses, which had stood for centuries, and over the doorway of which was inscribed a verse from the Psalms of David in old Swedish.

Flora was undecided: "Whither do you conduct me?" asked she hesitating.

"To a witch," replied I.

"Are there yet witches in Sweden?" said Flora, following me. "But," continued she, somewhat disparagingly, "I have no confidence in the witches of our day, with their card and coffee-cup wisdom."

After we had mounted several steps, I opened a door, and we entered a room where a young girl sate and sewed. I prayed Flora to wait for me here, and went into another chamber, the door of which was shut.

After some time I returned to Flora, and led her in with me.

I saw an expression of astonishment and curiosity depict itself in her countenance, as her eyes riveted themselves upon the figure which, clad in a flowing black silk robe, sate in a large chair by the only window of the room, the lower part of which was shaded by a green curtain. The daylight streamed from the upper half of the window brightly down upon a countenance which was less consumed by age than by suffering, and whose strong and not handsome features stifled the idea that it had ever possessed charms, or that looks of love could ever have rested upon it. Yet this countenance was not without sun. It had a pair of eyes whose glance was not common. It was restless, and as it were vacillating towards indifferent things and objects. But if it were animated by a feeling or by a thought—and that often was the case—then it had beams that could warm, strength which could penetrate; for there lay in it great and deep earnestness. The hair, still beautiful, and of a dark brown, was drawn off the large brow. A plain snow-white lace-cap surrounded the pale, grave countenance. The unknown held the left hand of an almost transparent delicacy, against her breast, in the other she had a pencil, with which she appeared to have been making observations in the margin of a large Bible.

The furniture of the room was so simple that it might have belonged to poverty, but all bore the stamp of neatness and comfort, which does not unite itself with poverty. A vase of fresh flowers stood upon the table, upon which lay books and manuscripts. Every thing in the room was simple and ordinary; the large wonderful eyes alone which beamed there, awoke a feeling that this was the dwelling of a powerful life.

Flora seemed to receive an impression of this, as we neared the unknown, who greeted us with great friendliness, as she said, excusing herself, "permit me that I remain seated!"

She invited us with the hand to seat ourselves upon the two cane chairs which stood near the table, and gave to us, smiling, a sprig of geranium from the flower-vase on the table.

Her earnest eyes riveted themselves upon Flora, who cast down hers, and appeared to struggle for the power to raise them again. I withdrew presently from that part of the room, and left the two together.

I heard the unknown say with a gentle, grave voice; "So young, so beautiful, and yet—not happy!"

Flora was silent a moment, and seemed to struggle with herself. At length she said:

"No! not happy, but—who can tell me how I may become so? Knew I any one who could tell me that, I would go to him through deserts and midnight; but oracles have vanished from the world."

"Not vanished, but only changed their abode," said the unknown, calmly.

"Changed their abode? To where?"

"From the ancient temples, from the deserts, have they removed into the most holy sanctuary of life, into the human soul."

"And thither," continued Flora, sarcastically, "it is more difficult to come than to Delphi and Dodona. And what would now this new-fashioned oracle reply to my question? How shall I become happy?"

"Follow the inward voice!"

"A true oracular answer, that is to say, an answer that says nothing at all. I at least know nothing of *one* inward voice, but of ten, at least, which one after the other speak in me."

"One must not believe all voices, one must question and deeply listen till one hears the right voice."

"There are in the soul," said the unknown, in a friendly, smiling, insinuating manner, "quiet groves, silent grottoes, and temples—thither must we go. There speaks our genius." The unknown seemed to enjoy the pictures which she called forth.

It seemed to me as if a certain coolness had overflowed Flora's passionate soul at these words. With a sigh and a tearful eye she said,—

"Oh! he who flees to this still region and there finds rest, must yet flee from the world and from himself!"

"He should not flee, he should only collect himself, collect himself in stillness, but for a great object in life."

Flora's thoughts before the sculpture of Sergel seemed to return to her; her look was animated.

"Ah!" said she, "I have sometimes imagined and thought, but—it is now too late. The unrooted flower can no longer keep itself firm, it must be driven by wave and wind."

"It is never too late," said the unknown, emphatically. "But it may often be difficult enough. Ah! I know it well, this flower without a root, this want of foundation and soil, which is commonly the fruit of a false education. No way is more difficult than the way to collect oneself out of dissipation and to become oneself, but still it may be found, and we may walk in it."

At this moment a sunbeam broke through the window, and streamed softly trembling through the flowers of the vase upon the pages of the holy

book. The eye of the unknown followed the path of light and shone with great delight as she spoke in broken sentences—

"No! it is never too late to tread the bright paths which unite heaven and the earth and mankind to each other in noble endeavours. They open themselves in our days richer than ever, and in all directions—in all spheres of life—and the eyes of men become more and more opened, and love refuses not his guiding hand! Courage only and a resolute will, and the apparently unrooted plant will take root firmly, and will bloom forth beautifully in the light of the Eternal!"

Flora followed not. As the spirit of the unknown thus raised itself towards the light, Flora's spirit seemed to sink and to look down into the darker depth.

"And after all," said she gloomily, "everything is yet vanity. Every human life has its snake, against which no power can combat. Sooner or later a time comes to every one in which all pleasure is at an end, in which one is subjected to pain, to old age, to death! Is there no power, no bliss, which this can withstand?"

"Yes! let a dying one assure you of this. See you! I go now with rapid speed towards my change, and great are my sufferings; yet I am so happy that day and night I must sing praises. Many a charming draught has life extended to me; much that was bitter has been changed into sweet, but yet *the best* wine has been preserved for me till the last."

"The lots here in the world are thrown differently for mankind," said Flora, not without bitterness; "some seem made for misfortune, others again have, like you, sunshine from the cradle to the grave. And for these it must be easy to be good."

"You would perhaps think differently, if you knew me rightly," said the unknown softly; "and a glance into my breast would allow you to judge whether I have always had a sun-brightened life, as you imagine—and yet you would only see an image of affliction which no human eye has seen, and which I myself have almost forgotten. The bitter waves have long ceased to roar, but they have left traces behind them." She opened the black dress, removed a white cloth, and showed us——a horrible sight! The bloody picture was soon concealed again.

"Pardon me!" said the unknown to Flora, who with a cry of horror had covered her eyes, "and now fear not! I feel that suffering comes. I shall not be able to keep back all complaint. Be not terrified. It will soon be over."

At that moment she seized convulsively a roll of papers, the whole body trembled, and the hue of death overspread her face, which with a dull cry of pain sunk upon her breast. This continued probably for ten minutes, then the hyæna of pain seemed to release the sufferer from his claws, but she evidently had not fully recovered her mind, and her soul seemed to wander in far regions, whilst her lips spoke broken words, like to those which Asaria sung in the fiery furnace.

By degrees the exalted expression passed from her countenance. A slumber, as it were, came over it. Then the unknown opened her eyes; they were clear and full of consciousness. She took up a little mirror which lay on the table and contemplated herself in it.

"It is over!" said she, as if to herself, and smiled with a thankful look towards heaven. Now for the first time she seemed to remember that she was not alone.

"It is now over," as she turned her again-enfeebled glance to Flora and me, "forgive me! Yet I know certainly that you do so. Compassionate me not! I am happy, unspeakably happy!"

I arose in order to end our visit.

"Permit me to come again," prayed Flora with tearful eyes, as she took her leave.

"Willingly," replied the unknown, directed to us a dimmed but friendly look, and extended to us her hand affectionately.

We went.

"Who is she?" asked Flora on the steps.

"She will be unknown," replied I, and we were both silent till we reached home.

As I went down to dinner I heard my young sister (who knew nothing of the forenoon's revolution in Flora) thus giving orders in the drawing-room

"Trala, la, la! Jacob, do not forget, immediately after dinner, to go to the old coachman with this cake and bottle of wine. And in coming back do not forget to bring the rennets with you, of which my mother is so fond. And you, Ulla, remember at last that you have Miss Flora's dress ready this evening. You must be prodigiously industrious. La, lalali, la, la, la! And to-morrow you shall make yourselves merry. Then I shall let you go to the opera to see the 'May-day.' There you shall be merry to some purpose. Jacob shall be Ulla's and Karin's protector. Tralalili, lalili, la, la, la.

Thus went on for a while the harmonious commands, and gave me again a little proof that it is the endeavour of my Selma in the world to make every one around her happy. But *endeavour* is not the right word. When goodness approaches its consummation it has an inward harmony, an ennobled nature, whose movements are as involuntarily beautiful as the movements of Taglioni in the Sylphide. She makes the most difficult thing easy, and gives a charm to the meanest exterior of life.

Flora, during dinner, was thoughtful and gloomy. In the afternoon Lennartson came, and had a long conversation with her. He seemed earnestly and fervently to beseech something from her. She wept. At length I heard her say with vehemence,

"Not now, not now, Lennartson. Have patience with me still, for a little time, and I will tell you all; and then you will see that you are the only one in the world whom I love."

Lennartson now arose with a strong expression of discontent. He appeared impatient, and came into the other ante-room, in which Selma and I sate. The sun shone through the crystal of the chandelier, and hundreds of little prismatic flames trembled on the walls, and on the pictures with which these were covered. Selma remarked the beauty of the colours, and the impression which their beauty made upon the mind.

"Yes!" said Lennartson, aloud, as he fixed his eyes upon her, "light, purity is beautiful, as in colour, so also in the human mind. I cannot comprehend how people love darkness, how people can be willing to linger in it; they must, in that case, have something to conceal, or——suspiciously dread the light."

Flora had approached, but remained standing at the door, on whose frame she leaned, whilst she held her hand pressed upon her breast, and riveted a glance of bitter pain on the speaker.

Selma saw this, and tears came into her love-

ly eyes. She said to Lennartson, with animation, and almost reproach,

"Clouds often conceal the sun from us, and yet it is still bright. If we could only raise ourselves above the clouds we should see it."

Lennartson looked at Selma with an inquiring glance, which by degrees melted away in mildness.

"Yes, you are right," said he, slowly; "there may be faults in those who complain."

He went again to Flora, seized her hand, bowed himself over it, and said some words to her which I did not hear, but whose effect I remarked in Flora's grateful look. Lennartson soon after this left us.

The 2d of February.

Flora is calmer, and all quiet in the house. I begin to be satisfied with the polemical connexion between me and my stepmother. But shall we ever attain to the ideal of a noble contention, which the German professors, Feuerbach and Grollmann, have shewed to the world? These two remarkable men were the warmest friends, and, in the early part of their lives, were of the same way of thinking. Afterwards they separated in their scientific views, but without thereby allowing their personal esteem and friendship to be disturbed. They invariably dedicated to each other their works, in which they invariably sought the one to convert the other. Thus they argued in love, and by the production of excellent works, to the end of their lives. Over such contentions must angels indeed rejoice.

5th February.

My acquaintance with the Viking begins to be somewhat stormy. But I console myself with the thought that 'the storm belongs to God's weather,'* and may be governed by His spirit.

We were invited yesterday to a breakfast at the Chamberlain's. Without flattering myself, and without great self-love, I could very well understand the correctness of my stepmother's diplomatic hint, namely, that the breakfast was given on my account. The host did me *les honneurs* of his handsome house; his splendid furniture, his Athenienne, with a thousand little sumptuousnesses; his many arrangements, for convenience, and for the pleasant enjoyment of life; nay, I must even see his own expensive toilet. Whilst I thus wandered with him through his rooms, I in vain sought for a picture of actual value, or an object of higher interest; I found nothing of the kind, and I could not say much about the rest of the ornaments.

Wilhelm Brenner's eye was often watchfully directed upon me, whilst I was receiving so much of the host's attention. He on the contrary was taken up with a very pretty Mrs. Z.—the same with whom I had seen him at the gallery—a widow, and rich. "Z," says a writing copy, "is in the Swedish language a superfluous letter;" and so methought was Mrs. Z. at this breakfast. By the abstracted looks of the Viking, I might have presumed that he thought so too; but for all that he remained near her, and amused himself by observing me from a distance. This rather vexed me; and thus for that reason I entertained myself more than common with the wit of my courteous uncle, said merry things myself, and contributed in my own way to entertain the company, for which I received much applause, especially from my stepmother. Towards two o'clock people separated, and went home. As the weather was fine we walked. I saw Mrs. Z. go away on the arm of the Viking. The Chamberlain accompanied us, together with other gentlemen.

Scarcely were we come to the Castle Hill, when the Viking, under full sails from the side of the Bridge of Boats, joined himself to us. He was quite warm, and wiped his forehead. I had the Chamberlain on my left; Brenner took the right, and heard how I was making love—ridiculous! But what he had not heard was the occasion for my satirical sally, namely, the sighs and the little song of my uncle's love and the warmth of his heart! all which cooled me indescribably, because I knew the ground and the intention of it.

"I think," said I, "that never was so much said about love, and so little known about it as in our days. Those who talk publicly the loudest about Christian love, rend one another most bitterly; and as concerns the love which men vow to women, these are only springs of a very doubtful value. How many tender flames—those which are more smoke than flame—burst forth because one has ennui, because one wants to amuse oneself in some way? Is it not thus in glowing Italy, as you yourself have told me? Do not people form connexions there on purpose to drive away time? and merely continue them, because one has no spirit to undertake something else? and so one drags lamentably through life with sighs and lemonade. Here, in our North, we seek really a little more substantial nourishment for love, seek the good things which open a prospect to comfortable life, dinners and good suppers, and so on. Yet the foundation is still no better, and love is even as—needy."

"Have you then never met with, or seen 'REAL LOVE' in the world?" asked the Viking, with a tone of displeasure, and as it were of compassion for me.

"To be sure," continued I, in the same tone, "to be sure I have seen men feel actual love, nay, actually also become quite thin from it. I have heard them declare, when they met with hard hearts, that their life was gnawed by worms, and that people would soon have to weep over their death. Yes, I believe too, that this at one time they themselves also believed; but this is certain, nevertheless, that in one or two years afterwards I have seen these men marry others than those for whose sake they would die, and that too, stout of body and full of joy. In one word, I have seen enough of life and of the world, to have but little confidence in this so much spoken of, and in romances so much bepraised love, and to wish to have as little as possible to do with it. It is not worth one of the sighs which it costs."

"*Femme philosophe!*" exclaimed the Chamberlain. "You reason perfectly justly as regards this passion. I value the passions very little. Esteem, delicacy, mutual condescension, lay as good a foundation for a much more enduring happiness than—"

We were at this moment just about to cross the North Bridge. Flora just then remembered that she wanted to buy something at Medberg's, my stepmother and Selma had the same thoughts; but I, who had no such views, and wished to get home, said that I would continue my way alone, and wait for the party at home. I earnestly declined the offers of my uncle to accompany me, and as the rest of the party took their way to-

* Geijer.

wards the Mynt-market, I pursued my way over the bridge.

But scarcely had I gone twenty paces when I saw the Viking at my side, and discovered, I know not how, that my arm rested in his. He hasted onwards with such prodigious strides, that I had trouble to keep up with him.

He turned round at a right angle, just where the bridge extends itself to the right, and remained standing in that corner where the river rages below, and the poplars of the river-parterre ascend upwards to the granite balustrades of the bridge. Then he dropped my arm, and turning towards me with a confidential air, said with a warm but suppressed voice,—

"Tell me! Is all that which you have just now said, this cursed gallemathias of love, your really earnest thought?"

"My really earnest thought," repeated I.

"That I will not believe," continued he warmly, "or I pity you from my whole heart! Good heavens! how can you thus despise the highest and holiest in life! When I hear such talk it makes me abusive. How can people be so contracted, nay I must say, so stupid; and see things in such an oblique, such a false, such a fundamentally false light! I can become angry when I hear how a woman, created to love and to be loved, so mistakes herself, and lets herself be so bewildered by the little poverties of life, that she can exchange them for that of which thought has no idea, and the tongue no word, and which exists as certainly upon the earth as it exists in heaven, and which is the only feeling by which we can comprehend the life of heaven; the only feeling which gives value to life. People talk about science and philosophy as instructors of the heart and of life! That is altogether nonsense say I, compared with the ennobling of a noble love!"

"This is an especially well-chosen place for a *tête-à-tête*, and to preach a sermon on love!" thought I, smiling in my own mind, as I observed the vehement mien of the Viking, and the mass of walking and driving people who were in motion around us, and of whom the Viking, in his angry mood, seemed to take no notice. I was also somewhat confounded by his behaviour towards me, but I looked at the raging waters below me, and at the raging spirit before me, and I know not what fresh breath of air passed over my soul. I was yet silent, when Brenner continued as before—

"And this miserable glass-cupboard reason! It makes people from fear of life, shut themselves in a birdcage; from fear of fresh air, steam themselves to death in the warmth of the stove; and from fear of strong feelings and great sufferings, waste their souls and their time in mere trifles. Tell me, how can you endure such reason? It is just as false as it is miserable. It is good for nothing, say I!" And the Viking struck with his clenched fist so violently upon the balustrade, that it would have trembled if it had not been of stone.

As I still stood there like Lot's wife, changed by a shower of fire into a pillar of salt, and was seized upon by a strange feeling, he continued with increasing violence, "Tell me! I will know, what, or who is it that has let you get hold of such a mistrusting of life, of mankind; nay, even of our Lord himself. If it be your blessed philosophy, then—throw it into the river!"

Brenner, by the violent action which he was here making with his arms, struck my reticule, which rested on the balustrade; it fell into the river, and was borne by its waves rapidly forward into the sea.

This catastrophe, and the sight of the Viking's astonishment, dissolved at once my immoveable state into a hearty laugh, and as Brenner seemed ready to take the speediest measures for saving the reticule, I held him back, and said—

"Trouble not yourself about it. There are only a few rennets that suffer shipwreck in it. I care nothing about it. Only let your angry temper go with it to the sea, for in truth you do me injustice."

"Do I do you an injustice—thank God for it!" said Brenner, with a look which deeply affected me, and I continued—

"Yes, because, although that which I said just now, and which has made you so angry, is actually my serious opinion, yet I have my reservation as to my object. I distinguish between Amor and Eros, but I have seen more of the first than of the last in life, and I spoke properly of that."

"But you believe in the other?"

"That I do. That I will say; I believe in general in the truth and depth of the feelings of which you speak; but in individual cases I am, in consequence of certain experience, always mistrustful. In the mean time, I thank you right openly for the proof of friendship which you have given to me. Ah! let me think about love as I will; I believe in friendship, and I feel that we are friends."

And herewith I took his arm, and began to proceed homewards. The Viking said—

"Love, friendship! should these be thus separated? And how can anybody doubt the one who believes in the other?"

It did not please me to answer this question, and our conversation was here interrupted by our being overtaken by our party who had been left behind. They looked somewhat amazed, and said various things of our 'speedy return home.' The Viking declared—

"Miss Sophia lost her bag or reticule in the river."

But how it was lost, he said not; and they began to propose means for recovering it, and the Viking, again in cheerful humour, made various break-neck and impossible proposals.

The 3d.

A far handsomer reticule, encircled with a bouquet of roses and myrtle, was sent to me from him in the name of the lost one, which, as he said, had been fished out of the river in this form. The 'river spirit' wished in these flowers to speak to you of his love, said the Viking, and he wondered what kind of an answer he would receive.

I said, "Merely great thanks!"

"And if he be not satisfied with that?" asked Brenner.

"Then, his flowers should be — sent back to him," said I, half jesting and half seriously.

"You would not throw them in the river?" said the Viking, quite gravely—"you are then not afraid of wounding, of doing wrong? You can be stern, *unsparing*."

"You forget," said I, interrupting him, "that the 'river spirit' and his feelings are fictions, and I am no longer of the age in which one believes in such things; neither can I see, dearest Brenner, why a pretty little joke should be taken so seriously, which in itself is very polite, and for which I thank you sincerely."

The Viking was silent, but looked dissatisfied; I begin to fear that the man has a very bad temper.

The 7th.

And a great many faults has he found in me to-day; he has reproached me for my self-will, or, as he called it, my 'Finnish-temper.' I told him that this was precisely my best quality, and as he shook his head, I related to him that I was descended from a race of the Wasastjernar, who had given to the world the most beautiful example of the Finnish national temper. Thus, namely, when the Russians in the year 1809, conquered Finnland, there lived in the city of Wasa, two brothers, one the judge of the court of justice, the other a merchant, who, when the residents of the city were compelled to swear an oath of fidelity to the Emperor of the Russias, alone and steadfastly refused it.

"'We have sworn an oath of fidelity to the King of Sweden, and unless he himself released us from it, we cannot swear obedience to another ruler,' remained their constant answer to all persuasions, as well friendly as threatening. Provoked by this obstinacy, and fearing the example which would be given by it, the Russians threw the stiff-necked brothers into prison and threatened them with death. Their answer remained always the same, to the increasing severity and multiplied threats of the Russians. At length the sentence of death was announced to them, as well as that, on a fixed day, they were to be conducted out to the Gallows-hill, and there be executed as criminals, in case their obstinacy did not give way and they took the required oath. The brothers were immoveable. 'Rather,' replied the judge, in the name of both, 'will we die, than become perjured.'

"At this answer a powerful hand struck the speaker on the shoulder. It was the Cossack who kept watch over the brothers, and now exclaimed with a kindling glance, 'Dobra kamerad' ('bravo comrade!')

"The Russian authorities spoke otherwise, and on the appointed day permitted the brothers to be carried out to the place of execution. They were sentenced to be hanged; but yet once more at this last hour, and for the last time, pardon was offered them if they would but consent to that which was required from them.

"'No!' replied they, 'hang, hang! We are brought hither not for speech-making, but to be hanged.'

"This steadfastness softened the hearts of the Russians. Admiration took place of severity, and they rewarded the fidelity and courage of the brothers with magnanimity. They presented them not merely with life, but sent them free and safely over to Sweden, to the people and to the King to whom they had been true to the death. The King of Sweden elevated them to the rank of nobles, and after this they lived greatly esteemed in the capital of Sweden to a great age."

This relation gave pleasure to Brenner. He promised with a beaming and tearful eye no more to reproach me with my 'Finnish mind.'

The 9th.

Something astonishing on the side of my stepmother and on my side, but not in the way in which my stepmother expected. For it really was no surprise to me that my stepmother conducted me with a mysterious air into her boudoir, and announced herself as '*Envoyé extraordinaire*,' as '*ministre plenipotiaire*,' on the side of my uncle the Chamberlain, in order to treat with me of an alliance between him and me. But it was unexpected by me, that my stepmother said not a word to persuade me to consent to it. On the contrary, she said sundry beautiful, and to me, particularly agreeable things, on the danger of bringing about or persuading to such things. She wished merely my happiness; I myself must choose that which would lead to it. On one side, I certainly should feel myself happy with a husband like the Chamberlain, and in the '*état*,' in which a marriage with him would place me; but on the other side, it also was certain, that as an unmarried person I should also find myself very well off. Her house should always be mine, and she would be happy to see me there, and so on. "She had not now undertaken to woo for the Chamberlain, but merely to hear whether he might announce himself as a hopeful lover."

This circumspection of hers pleased me much, because I can thus ward off his attentions, and need not say a word to him, which is contrary to my nature, that little vexatious word, 'No!'

In the mean time he has been good to me, has showed me kindness and confidence—it grieves me not to be able to do him a pleasure—nay, perhaps, to be compelled to distress him. How poor is man here upon the earth! I feel myself quite melancholy and humble.

The 10th.

And thou, honest Wilhelm Brenner, shalt not hear from me that word of refusal. I understand now thy intentions well; but thou shalt not speak out that aloud which I cannot answer according to thy wishes; shalt not stretch forth thy true hand to see it rejected.—I value you too highly for that; I think too much of thee for that. I like Brenner greatly; but not so much as I love my own independence, the peace of my soul, and the prospect of a peaceful and care-free future. I will be his friend, but no more. I dread marriage; I dread that compulsion, that dark deep suffering, which the power of one being over another so often exhibits. I have seen so much of it.

I know well, that in consequence of wise laws of our evangelical church, marriage is not an indissoluble bond, but that a divorce can be obtained on various grounds; wherefore the polemic, which from certain quarters one hears against wedlock and conjugal life, has reached the highest degree of uselessness and absurdity conceivable. For what pure and thinking being enters into marriage without seriously regarding it, as our marriage formula so beautifully expresses—acknowledging in this act a public declaration of God's thought, and which therefore ought to be regarded as law and rule on earth? If He who only once or twice spoke to the children of earth, and then left them to unfold the meaning of his words—if even He had not by his words strengthened the principle of marriage, which, pure in the early times of the world, had its origin in the uncorrupted sense of the human race, yet would human prudence alone lead to the establishment of some law and regulation for marriage, with its glance directed to the children, which are its fruit. The marriage which calls forth in the wedded pair the knowledge of the meaning and object of their union, elevates them thereby to a point of moral greatness, from which the accidental provocations that arise in marriage are easily conquered. And certainly this union would make more people infinitely happy if they allowed themselves to be rightly consecrated by marriage, in its high and

holy spirit. Yes, if mankind once rose so high in moral greatness, that marriage might be released from all legal bonds, they would, precisely, by reason of this moral greatness—abide by the marriage.

I know also that very often is the woman the cause of unhappiness in marriage. I know that many a wife is for her husband, as it were, a cause of living irritation; and for the terror and warning of all bad wives I will write down here what occurred lately in my neighbourhood.

A young, honest and industrious man, who, with a wife and three children, made a good income by his industry, took arsenic a few days ago. Whilst under the most terrible effects of this, his wife would insist upon his drinking sweet milk. But he thrust her from him, saying—

"Let me die in peace! You have gnawed at me for these years like rust upon iron, I can live no longer."

But the wife in his last hours let him have no peace, but heaped upon him reproaches, and demanded, "Do you not know that you have committed a great sin against me and my poor children?"

"You would have it so," replied he coldly, and died. Listen to this, my good woman!

No less, my good gentleman, is it certain that the suffering which I have seen in marriage has proceeded especially from you, and for that reason I will take no lord and master, and will not become a wife.

And shall I on that account be less useful to society? Folly and the belief of fools! Friend, relation, citizen—noble names and occupations. O who is able fully to act up to them!

The 11*th.*

Again is a sledging party talked of, and the promoters of it are Lennartson and Brenner. Lennartson will drive Flora, and I suspect that he will take this opportunity of giving her pleasure and coming nearer to her. He pays attention evidently enough to her mood of mind, and this has been for several days in the highest degree disturbed.

The Viking has invited me to his sledge, and I have consented on the condition of his eldest sweet little daughter Rosine going with us. To that he has agreed, but only compelled by necessity. I will not take so long a drive *tête-à-tête* with the Viking, but I will carefully make use of the first opportunity to turn aside his schemes of conquest, and to tell him of my determination of remaining independent, of letting friendship, and not love, be the pulse in the life of my heart.

Selma has declared merrily that nobody shall drive her, but that she herself will go with her mother in their new covered sledge, and will be drawn by their beautiful 'Isabella:' and that thus shall it remain.

There will be a train of some fifty sledges. Selma and Flora rejoiced in it—like young girls. The gentlemen equip their sledges with the beautiful skins of wild beasts. We have talked already for a week of nothing else. May the weather only remain favourable.

Yet is it a purely-northern enjoyment, which a purely northern life has—such a pleasure-excursion as this in the clear winter air, under the bright blue heaven, upon the snow-white earth! They fly away so gaily and lightly, the open ones covered with skins and with white nets, which flutter over fiery, foaming horses, they fly along so fleetly to the play of jingling bells. And it feels so irresistibly pleasant thus to drive away over the earth in a train of joyous people, and by the side of a friend who participates in every feeling, every impression.

All this I felt yesterday, and yet I have retained an uneasy impression of our party of pleasure. Thus is it with all the pleasure of the world.

Still it was magnificent in the beginning. Our drive resembled a triumphal procession as we drove through the first streets of the city, and were seen and admired by a vast number of people, as well without as within their houses. After this, when it went out of the city-gates into the country, how white shone the snow-fields—how beautiful was the snow through the pine and fir-woods—how we flew like magic over land and lake, whilst the craggy, woody, shores fled past us! I was glad and enchanted, and Brenner enjoyed my delight, and that sweet girl between us increased it by her child-like joy.

After a tolerably long drive we stopped at an inn at the Park Well, where we were to dine. Dinner was ready to be served as we arrived, and was quite splendid and cheerful, but without that offensive ostentation and superfluity which ought to be banished from the society of thinking people. Our hosts, Lennartson and Brenner, were the life and joy of the dinner. Songs also were sung, in which the voice of the Viking produced a great effect. When we have advanced a little in our friendship I will counsel him to moderate his voice a little.

After dinner Lennartson asked me to play a nigarpolska, and this immediately set the whole company in lively motion with its grotesque, but merry flourishings and jokes. Even Aunt Penderfelt got upon her legs and flourished about with the rest. Selma and Flora signalized themselves by their grace, although in different ways. At length people must begin to think of their return, and cool themselves before it was undertaken.

A part of the company was already about to move away, when Brenner called my attention to two portraits which hung in the room; the one represented the great Queen Elizabeth of England, the other the noble Princes Elizabeth of Thüringia.

"Which of these would you be?" asked Brenner.

In jesting tone I asked back again, "have you not heard speak of a person, who when asked whether he would have warm or cold milk, answered, 'might I ask for a little ale-posset?' I must now answer you somewhat in the same way, since I am right joyful that I am not obliged to be one of these Elizabeths, and choose rather to be that which 'I am,' though somewhat less."

Brenner smiled and said, "but if you must choose between these two, could you well be undecided? How beautiful is not that affectionate, self-sacrificing wife, beside the cold, wordly-prudent Egotist?"

"Granted!" I replied; "but the question always is what a woman loves, and for whom she sacrifices herself. Thus, for example, it always seems to me, that the exclusive love of one human being would be too mean an object for a human life, for the citizen of a divine kingdom. And I fancy that he who sinks himself in so contracted an existence in one individual, gives up the noblest in life."

"Ah! how contracted—and how incomprehensibly vexatiously said is that!" exclaimed the Viking.

"Not so contracted as you think," said I, somewhat proudly, "after that which I have seen of life. And then have I not seen many a young girl, with a rich soul, with a mind open to all that is good and beautiful in humanity, and full of will to work for it; have I not seen how this same girl, some years after her marriage, is shrunk together into a narrow circle of cares and joys—the sense for the general and the whole lost for ever, and more and more compressed into the single and the individual, till she at last had lost sight of her higher goal, and scarcely could lift her eyes above the sill of her own house."

"But my best, gracious Miss Sophia," exclaimed the Vilking; "that is an entirely mistaken, an entirely crazy turning of the question, an entirely insane direction. Why should people for their own sakes overlook the true and real? Does a young girl give herself away, or is she given away to a dolt or a block of wood, or to any other beast, then indeed she must drive upon a wooden road, and then I am not guilty, and yet less is love in its true sense guilty. Because true love is that which, while it unites two beings with each other, unites them only the more closely with social life and with humanity; right marriages consecrate people for a higher and a richer world; the right home is that where the fear of God rules like an invincible spirit, and all members of it, each one according to his strength and according to his gifts, is made useful for the great home of the world. This is clear as sunlight! I cannot comprehend how people see these things in an oblique point of view, and argue against them accordingly. That, methinks, is really contracted; and pardon me if I say, A LITTLE STUPID!"

"I forgive," replied I, smiling, "because I begin to be accustomed to your calling me stupid; and your description of these connexions in their beauty affects me, but such are seldom found on earth, and I have not seen them upon my path. On the contrary, I have seen and heard so much that is bitter in domestic life, which knits itself up with marriage, that I am become afraid of it, and for my part have determined not to let myself be bound by it, but to live independently, certain of this, that I in this manner can best accomplish my human mission."

"That you will not," said Brenner, very decidedly. "You mistake yourself. As yet you are young and full of life; as yet the world meets you; as yet you are surrounded by pleasures; but a time will come in which the world will be benumbed towards you, in which you yourself will be benumbed, be frozen for want of warm hearts, of true 'bands which will knit you to earthly life.'"

"Through the power of God I hope neither to be burned nor to be frozen," replied I, smiling. "The human soul also has its sun, which beams high above all earthly suns, and beside this—why should I feel the want of warm hearts as long as my own heart is warm? And that does not feel as if it would grow cold, even if all the snow in the world were piled upon it."

In the mean time we were come down to the ground-floor, where a mass of people were putting on their furs. The light of the full moon shone over the landscape, which, from the height where we stood, spread itself out in winterly pomp. But all was snow-covered and stiff. The trees shone with crystals of ice in the cold moonlight. The cold was severe. An involuntary shudder passed through me. The Viking had taken my fur cloak from the servant, and warmed it on his heart.

"The snow of life," said he, softly and inwardly. "O how you should preserve yourself from it!" he wrapped the cloak around, but it was not this which made me conscious of a soft embrace, warm as a summer wind.

Soon sate we again in the sledge, but the company had separated themselves, and drove in little parties back to the city. Lennartson and Brenner remained together, and then came my stepmother in the covered sledge, with Selma and Mrs. Rittersvärd. We were the last of the party, because the hosts considered it as their duty to watch over the departure of all the guests. As we had been warned that the ice was not very strong, every one had agreed that during the drive over the lake, they were to keep at a distance of from twenty to thirty paces from each other.

The moonlight was beautiful, and beautiful its lighting up of the white ice-fields of the dark shore. Far off in the back-ground we saw the lights of Stockholm glimmer. The drive was romantic, but its effect was lost on me. The little Rosine soon fell asleep with her head resting on my bosom, and the Viking made use of the opportunity to lead the conversation in the direction which I feared, therefore I evaded it with a few short and cold answers. He was vexed, and said provoking things to me, to which I was silent. At length he too was silent. We were both of us out of tune, and with a melancholy feeling I contemplated the passing shore, the clouded heaven, and the dark fir-branches, which here and there protruded from the ice to shew the open places, and which, in the increasing dusk, resembled horribly fantastic shapes of animals and men. Some words spoken by Brenner had wounded my heart. The gloomy impression of the moment made me feel this deeper—I could not help weeping, but quite silently. I know not whether he conjectured what was passing within me, but after a while he said with a gentle voice—

"Have I been disagreeable again? Forgive me! Do not be angry with me, good, sweet Miss Sophia!" and he laid his hand gently upon mine. I pressed it without replying, for I could not then speak. Further communication was prevented by a dull cry for help, which forced itself on our ears, and in which we could distinguish the voice of a child, which complained lamentably. Brenner pulled in his sledge.

"Perhaps somebody who has driven into a hole in the ice," said he. "I must see what it is. Might I take you and Rosine to your stepmother's sledge? As soon as possible I will return."

"We will leave the little girl there," said I; "but why should I now part from you, when I probably in some way or other may be helpful to you? No! I go with you."

The Viking made no answer; we looked about for the sledge of my stepmother, and a feeling of anguish took hold of me as we could not discover it.

At that same moment two sledges came driving furiously over the ice, from the point where the cry was heard. In the first sate two boisterous and noisy gentlemen, whose voices as well as their mode of directing their horses, made it evident that they were in no quiet state. They drove so furiously upon our horse, that if Brenner had not suddenly checked it, probably some misfortune might have happened. A dark cloud

concealed the moon, and the deep twilight prevented us from distinguishing the countenances of the noisy gentlemen, but I thought that I recognised the Rutschenfelts in the voice. The other sledge paused a moment, and a voice, which I knew for that of Felix Delphin, said—

"Hold! hold! Really I believe that we have driven over the boy behind us there."

"Ah, a pretty joke!" replied the other, who I would wager was St. Orme; "he only got a little blow, that I will swear. Let the cursed youngster howl, if it amuse him. Let the reins go! else we shall come too late, and the others will get the best part of the carouse from us. See there, now he is still! Let us go!"

And the sledges rushing at the most rapid speed, passed us towards Stockholm.—(N. B. The gentlemen whom I thought I now recognised had declined to be of our sledging party, on the pretence that they were invited out for this day.)

In the intention of turning to the point where the cry, although weaker, was still heard, we saw that Lennartson also turned about, and heard Flora exclaim with anxiety—

"Certainly the ice at the edge is brittle, and we shall all go down together."

Lennartson gave the reins to the servant, and whilst he threw himself out of the sledge, called to us to stop and take him with us. We stopped, he sprang upon the sledge beam, and we drove rapidly forward.

We were now on the spot where feeble tones of lamentations made themselves still heard, and the moon shone over a singular group. A young lady in the most elegant winter dress, with bright red feathers, which waved in a white silk bonnet, stood, bending over a boy clothed in rags, whom a servant in livery had raised up; an old man of tall stature, with a staff in his hand, stood near, and stared up towards heaven with blind eyes.

The young lady was Selma, who having heard the cry for help earlier than we, and who seeing the other sledges continuing their drive, had prevailed on her mother to turn towards this side, in order to see if they could help. My stepmother remained with her sledge immediately on the place.

The old man related how two sledges had driven so rapidly, that he and the boy had not time to avoid them. The first sledge had knocked the boy down, and the second driven over him, and notwithstanding their cries, had continued on their way. The old man appeared not to have suffered at all, but the boy was severely hurt; and after Lennartson had in the best manner bound him with our pocket hankerchiefs, he carried him to the sledge of my stepmother, where he was left under the care of Selma. Our servant was commanded to accompany the blind man to his dwelling in the Park, but he was unwilling to separate from the boy, who was his only comfort and his only support since the death of his children, the parents of the boy; and he was for that reason seated with the coachman, and went with us.

We turned now again upon our homeward way, and met Flora, who was slowly driving towards us. Lennartson took his seat again beside her; but I fancy that the return was not truly agreeable to either of them.

On arriving at home Lennartson fetched instantly a physician to the boy, and this morning he is taken into the hospital. He is fortunately not dangerously hurt and will in a month's time be again restored. In the mean time he is Selma's and my child. Lennartson and Brenner have adopted the old man, whose disease of the eyes is of that kind which admits of an operation, and he may regain his sight.

Flora pouts and looks askew on all this affair, and on the common interest which has sprung up between Lennartson and Selma through their protegé, whilst the dissimilar behaviour of the two young girls on this occasion, seems to have made a strong impression on Lennartson.

The 17th.

I have endeavoured to examine Felix on the ice-drive and its adventure. He pretends to be ignorant and hurt in the highest degree, but a certain painful confusion in his manner convinces me that I have not suspected him and the others in an unjust manner. I have heard from Ake Sparrsköld, that St. Orme often misleads young men to drink, and then to gamble, and thus wins from them their money; and that he had invited Felix and his friends to an orgie of the lowest kind on the day of the sledging party. I now spoke seriously and warmly, nay, almost sisterly, to Felix, and warned him of this false and dangerous friend. I reminded him of his promise to Selma, and on that which depended upon it. He answered not a word, but looked unhappy, and left us quickly. I fear that he will not turn out well. His more regular life for some time after his conversation with Selma, seems not to have lasted long, and he is so weak that the Rutschenfelts 'do not be beguardianed, Felix! Be a man!' or the jest that 'he is already under petticoat government,' are sufficient to lead him into every possible folly. I have had a prompting to talk myself with St. Orme, and to call forth the good spirit in him; but think! if the wicked one shew his teeth to me. In the mean time I will let these thoughts concoct, yet a while; over-hasty words seldom fall in good ground.

The 20th.

It goes on hopefully and joyfully with our children, the seven-years-old and sixty-years-old. The aged man is operated upon, and it has succeeded excellently. Lennartson was here to-day, and related to us, in his lively way, the particulars of the affair.

The joy of the old man that he could again see the sun and his child; that he again could work, and lay aside the beggar's staff, affected us all. We took into consideration the future of our children, and adopted unanimously Lennartson's plans.

Selma has found means to draw Flora into this affair, so that she now, like others, takes part in it, and appears warmly to interest herself in it, namely—in Lennartson's presence.

The 23d.

The Baron has received additional honours in titles and stars. As he came to us this evening decorated with the latter, Flora exhibited great joy on that account, whilst Selma and I wished him joy in all simplicity. Lennartson received Flora's exaggerated tokens of joy with coldness, and was, for the rest, not quite in good humour. My stepmother noticed this, and said jestingly—

"It seems as if Lennartson quarrels with his good fortune precisely when it adorns him most handsomely."

"Good fortune!" said Lennartson, smiling sorrowfully.

"Yes," replied my stepmother, "at least, what most people would regard as such."

"Ah!" said Lennartson, while he seated himself beside her with a kind of filial confidence, "it is exactly that which vexes me, that people often regard such things as good fortune, and set value upon them, without asking whether they be a sign of merit; whether they have any real meaning; it makes me angry that it should be so, and that I myself am childish enough not to be rightly free from this weakness. It regularly torments me. But the superficiality of life is so infectious. Therefore I long to release myself from it."

"But in all the world not to quit the service on that account?" said my stepmother, terrified.

"No!" replied Lennartson, "that is quite another thing. I will only be released that I thereby—may come deeper into life. I know well when I could be indifferent to all this outward glitter, and warm and rich from the reward which no human eye sees, from a look, a quiet approval."

"And where is this Eldorado?" asked my stepmother, affected, and at the same time suspicious.

With a voice, which was at the same time softened and rendered more full by deep feeling, Lennartson said,

"I had it once in the heart of my mother; I would meet with it in the heart—of my wife; if," continued he, with emphasis, "if she understood me, if she were such as my soul desires, and my heart seeks after. Many a one congratulates me on my happiness in having made my own way in life, and I—consider myself not to have been happy, that I have not yet properly lived—at least, since my earliest youth," added he, mournfully.

All this was said half aloud to my stepmother, who was evidently affected, and spoke kindly words regarding the future, though it might not be in a cheerful tone.

I looked at the young girls: Flora blushed deeply; that Selma grew pale, I could merely suppose; because at my glance she rose up and left the room.

Here have I then become acquainted with one of the Lennartson faults of which the Viking spoke. But the way in which he discovered it has made the man only more interesting in my eyes.

The 1st of March.

Brenner will not understand me, will not attend to my hints. He seems as if he would give his heart free play in making an attack on my heart. Well, then! May his, during the combat, only not be wounded. I will not lose a friend in the lover, and a friend so noble and so dear to me as Wilhelm Brenner. I never was happy in love. Where I loved I have not been again beloved, and where I have been beloved with true affection I could not return the same feeling. But I have to thank friendship, pure-minded friendship, for my highest delights on the earth. A rejected lover may easily become the truest friend, and that he is not so is often the fault of the beloved woman.

In this case it will not be my fault, that I feel in myself. I know nothing more sorrowful than when an acquaintance, which begins in cordiality, extinguishes itself in bitterness; or where warm feelings change themselves into cold ones. Every seed of tenderness which the All-good has sown upon the earth, should unfold itself into a plant and flower; should here sprout up at His footstool, in order sometime to blossom yet more gloriously before His throne. If it be otherwise; if the flower die in its bud, then is it the fault of man, and a very sorrowful thing. I write this in the odour of the lilacs which I have received from my friend, and with a heart that is warm towards him. It is calm and light within me.

Thou that allay'st the restless heart's commotion,
Illuminator of life's midnight hour!
To whom was given the ancient world's devotion,
And even now art our most glorious dower;
Thou who wast by, when Chaos was up-broken;
Who played'st in joy in the Creator's sight;
Thou who wast by when *primal words* were spoken
And heights and depths gave Being forth to light.
Life's morn and evening star, O Wisdom! brightly,
When I in darkness lay, thy light was shewn;
Since then 'tis well with me, my heart beats lightly,
Burning with love; but, but for Thee alone!

The 2d.

The miserable, misfortune-bringing, poisonous and poisoned Lady-Councillors-of-Commerce! I would that they sat turned to stone up aloft on the hill of difficulty, and could move neither foot nor tongue! I would they had been fettered yesterday. Then should I not have been obliged to go thither to-day with the heaviest burthen which life has, and to come back without any alleviation; then had I not been obliged to sit here as now, and to write with a sort of desperation, while tears fall upon my paper rather than the words which I throw upon it, almost without seeing them.

But now came those birds of misfortune yesterday afternoon, and darted down by my stepmother. I was with her while I sat at my painting. I felt myself burdened by having to attend to all the movements which were made by the three ladies among our near and distant acquaintances. Already had they gone through a long list of "they believe, they say, they assert," when Mrs. P. vehemently exclaimed, "Now for a bit of news which is sure and certain! What think you of our honest Colonel Brenner having last week received 'a basket' from the rich widow, Mrs. Z.? That I know from her own sister-in-law, who related the whole affair to me. She herself, as regarded him, was not disinclined, but the five step-children would have terrified her."

"Yes, the poor man!" said Mrs. P., "he will not find it easy to get a wife with that crowd of children; at least not a wife who has money."

"Need Colonel Brenner then, in the choice of a wife, make money so much an object?" asked I, in no enviable state of mind.

"That a man always must who has five children to care for, and who has no other property than his profession," replied Mrs. P. "Brenner's wife had nothing; and he himself, although a man of rank, has been no good husbander of his income."

"Is Mrs. Z. an upright person?" asked I again; and Mrs. P. made answer—

"O, the person is well-behaved enough, I fancy; but she has neither head nor heart; but with a fine skin, a handsome figure, and large landed property,* one needs neither head nor heart to enchant. A little vain, a little mad about getting married, is she to be sure—it is an unfortunate passion that, of wishing to get married! I say with Madame de Sevigné, I would rather get drunk!

"I also," said I; "but is it known for certain

* Guldass säteri, an estate which, according to the Swedish laws, can only be held by a noble.

that Colonel Brenner paid his addresses to Mrs. Z. last week?"

"Quite certainly is it known, my sweetest of friends! Her own sister-in-law told me of it. Besides this, there are documents in the affair; for it was negotiated by letters, which certainly must have been very affecting, for Mrs. Z. has cried days and nights over them—there must singly and solely on that account have been a wash of pocket handkerchiefs. But she has her own friends, and will console herself, and think about a certain gentleman without children, and —*à propos*, people say also in the world that Colonel Brenner too will endeavour to console himself, and will seek for his consolation in this house; people assert even that Miss Sophia Adelan would know something more of the affair."

Reddening like a guilty person, and proud as an innocent one, I repelled the charge, and declared myself wholly unacquainted with it. And, as the sisters persisted in jesting with me, my stepmother said, with a graceful dignity which pleased me infinitely—

"As Colonel Brenner has so lately paid his addresses to Mrs. Z., it would very little accord with the esteem which he cherishes for Sophia, and with his own character, if he should so quickly solicit her hand. Besides, I fancy that this match would very little suit Sophia. It is no joke with so many stepchildren. If my Sophia wishes to be married, she will not lack opportunities of choosing among—um, um, um!"

"O, of course! That is certain! When a person has so many charms and talents, and so much property, there lacks nothing; and people talk already of a certain Baron and Chamberlain—perhaps one may already offer congratulations."

I scarcely was able to give a token of disavowal, and was glad that a servant came to say that the carriage was at the door, in which the Lady-Councillors-of-Commerce took leave, and my stepmother and Flora drove out to pay visits.

"Let nobody come in! say that nobody is at home!" said I to the philosopher (the old, trusty servant of the house, whose business it is to watch through the whole day, half sleeping in the hall), and I threw myself in the arm chair, before the piano, in the ante-room. One single light burnt in the chandelier, with a long wick. It was twilight in the room, it was twilight in my own soul.

"It is the property! It is a speculation!" thought I. My mind was in so painful a state that I was obliged to weep. The image of the Viking was dimmed in my inmost soul. I saw him before, so pure, so noble, so far from all worldly modes of action—and now! But no! I will not submit myself to the thoughts which the news that I have heard awakens in me. "Still! still!" said I to the tormenting spirits, "leave me my faith in him, and let me retain my friend. Besides, why should I believe that he will woo me? He will not. He seeks in me merely a confidant, a friend, a sister!" And I let all the five little children come up before me in order to explain his courtship of Mrs. Z.

The 'Sonate pathetique' of Beethoven lay upon the music desk, and I began to play it. This wild agitato removed the tumult from my soul, and hushed it; it elevated itself on the streams of sound, and burst with them through all thwarting hindrances to the grave, lovely, all-releasing, all-reconciling unveiling, to the glorious closing notes. So deeply was I absorbed by my music that I did not hear that a conversation was taking place in the hall, which ended in the philosopher opening the door and saying, in a voice which resembled that of the ghost in Hamlet:

"Miss Adelan, Colonel Brenner is in the hall, and will resolutely come in. Shall I beg him to go away?"

"Did I not say that nobody was to be admitted?" asked I.

"Yes, he said that," said a well-known voice. "But I said to him that I am already admitted!" And Brenner at one spring stood before me, with outstretched hand, so kind, so joyous, so cordial, that I nearly forgot all the impressions with which I had just then combated, and my heart moved itself towards him.

He gave me a bouquet of beautiful flowers, as he continued, "Only do not say to me that I should go away!"

Kindly, but sorrowfully, I said, "Ah no! Remain here now. My mother will soon be home."

"O, that is not of much consequence to me," said he. "I would now rather talk alone with you."

My heart beat from secret anxiety. He looked at me, and my appearance must have indicated fully my state of mind, for he was suddenly uneasy, and asked tenderly and with his whole heart whether I were ill?

"No, I am very well." Whether I was vexed? "Yes, I must confess that; I had heard something which had discomposed me." Whether he might not share it, whether he might not endeavour to be my comforter? I was silent. Should I tell him all? thought I. Yet no! That were indeed a folly. He would fancy that I was in love with him. He renewed his questions with more and more warmth. "No!" replied I, at length; "not now—perhaps at some future time—" Whether I were vexed with him? "Yes—no—he must not ask any more."

"Not ask any more?" exclaimed Brenner. He was silent for a while, and began then again, with a gentle, tremulous voice. "And yet I came now, on purpose, to ask you a serious question, a very important question—a question which has often thrust itself to my lips, and which I can no longer keep back—a question, upon which depends the weal or wo of my life. I came on purpose to ask—Sophia, will you, can you love me? I have long loved you unspeakably! Will you accompany me through life, in pleasure and pain?"

The voice, the look, the expression, even the pressure of his hand, which had seized mine—O, what eloquence of the heart! And all this he had consecrated the week before to Mrs. Z. And Mrs. Z., without head or heart, with a fine skin and landed property, ascended like a ghost between Brenner and me, and caused me indescribable anguish.

O, if he had but been to me that which he had been only a few hours before, how candidly and how warmly could I not have talked to him; how could I have refused his hand without wounding his heart; how could I have removed the lover, and yet have retained him for ever a friend.

But in the darkness which had now risen in my soul, I recognised neither him nor myself; the whole world was changed. A crippling coldness, a petrifying stupor overcame my whole being; I felt myself turned into a marble image,

and therefore I let Brenner talk without understanding him; heard him speak of his children, 'children which it was a delight and honour to have;' heard him say how he and his children would make me happy by love and gratitude; saw him bend his knee before me, conjuring me to listen to him and answer him. But I could not answer, could move neither hand nor tongue; my eyes were still, and staringly riveted upon him; yet I felt as if my eyes were filling by degrees with tears. Then he reproached me jestingly with keeping him so long before me on his knees; and with a sudden turn he seated himself at my feet, embraced my knees, and declared that he would not rise till I had given to him my 'Yes.'

This manœuvre had almost entirely overcome me. I was just about to lean myself towards his beloved head, and open my whole heart to him; but at that same moment I heard a bustle in the hall, and the voices of many persons who had entered.

In that same moment I awoke to a full consciousness, and to the whole bitterness of my position.

"Stand up! In God's name, stand up!" said I to Brenner. "Some one comes!"

"The whole world may come!" replied he, with defiance and affection; "I shall not stand up without an answer from you."

A thought of hell arose in my mind; he will surprise thee, he will compel thee; he will remain sitting here at thy feet in order to make it impossible for thee to refuse his hand!

With proud resentment in look and voice, I sprang up, and said—

"Colonel Brenner! I have done wrong to leave you so long in uncertainty. Pardon me, and hear now my last answer. My hand and my property I will preserve independent. I esteem no man high enough to give him right and rule over them."

Brenner on his part had risen up—and at my stern reply fixed upon me a look full of inexpressible astonishment. It was as if he could not thoroughly understand me. Merry voices and the steps of several persons approached the drawing-room door from the hall. I betook myself to the door which led to Selma's chamber. Here, with my hand upon the lock, I turned round and looked at Brenner. He stood immoveable, his eyes directed to me; their expression I cannot describe, and I could not rightly comprehend; but I read in them an eternal farewell; and, with a soul assailed by indescribable and contending feelings, I fled up to my room. That which I felt to be the bitterest and the most painful at this moment was that Brenner and I were for ever separated. I called up anew Mrs. Z., in her whole terrible shape, and Brenner's conduct to her, in order to excuse and explain my own conduct; but then came the remembrance of Brenner's last look—that strange look, which went through bone and marrow, and all his culpability vanished, and I alone was the culpable one, the one worthy of condemnation.

I was interrupted in this combat by Selma, who besought me to come into company. I thought at first to excuse myself; but when I found that Lennartson was there, a thought or suspicion arose within me, and I followed Selma.

I had a fever from excitement of mind. I soon observed that Lennartson's glance was directed to me with an inquiring expression, and soon also he seated himself on the corner of a 'causeuse' and said in a low voice—

"As I came here this evening I found Brenner alone in the drawing-room, in a strange state, and he could or would not give any explanation of it. Have you seen him this evening?"

"I pray you," said I, and answered his question by another, "tell me whether it be true, as I have lately heard, that within these few days a connexion has been spoken of betwixt Brenner and Mrs. Z.? You are Brenner's friend, you must know."

"I cannot deny it," replied the Baron smiling.

"Is it true that a marriage was spoken of?"

"Yes, actually was spoken of."

"He has then really paid his addresses to her?"

"Hum! that is again another question," said Lennarston, smiling.

"How! Did you not say that a marriage had been spoken of?"

"Does it then follow of necessity that *he* must have made the proposal?"

"Not? I fancied so. I pray you jest not in this affair, but tell me out plainly how it hangs together. It is to me inexpressibly important—more important than I can say."

"Well, then; what I know of the affair is, in a few words, this: Mrs. Z. wished to have Wilhelm Brenner for her husband; he did not wish her altogether for his wife. A third person went with the proposal—and with the refusal to and fro between them."

"O God! is it possible? And—pardon me! From whom do you know this? From Brenner himself?"

"No, certainly not; but exactly from this third person, who ought for two reasons to bid adieu to the office of spokesman. It pleases me, Miss Adelan, to be able to give you an explanation of an affair in which you have been so badly informed. And now—best Miss Sophia, permit me, as Brenner's and your friend, a question. What is the occasion of his strange state of mind this evening?"

"It is my fault! my unpardonable fault!" I could say no more, I was crushed to pieces.

Lennarston was silent; he regarded me with his serious, prudent eyes. After a minute's silence, he said gently, almost flatteringly—

"I shall probably see him to-night. May I not take to him from you a message—some kind of greeting?"

"Ah, what is the use of it? He cannot, he ought not to forgive me! We are separated for ever through my fault—through my unworthy mistrust. But, if you will, impart to him this conversation."

And with this it was ended; but now began for me the pangs of conscience.

O what talisman is there, indeed, against the bitter, crushing feeling of having been unjust towards a noble friend—having cruelly wounded his heart, his dearest feeling; to have murdered the faith in that which he loved—to have disturbed his happiness! And for such a deed no comfort can be found. O Wilhelm Brenner! now I understand thy looks full of condemnation, and full of godlike sorrow over me. Yet when thou knowest that I have bathed my pillow with tears, and yet in the midst of my suffering felt a proud joy over thee, and thanked God that I can bear thy image clear in my breast, wouldst thou—wouldst thou not forgive me?

I passed the night without slumbering in the least, I waited for the morning with impatience

—I hoped that with it Lennartson would come. The morning came, gray and cold, and no Lennartson, and no single sunbeam in my nocturnal soul. One hour went after the other—that waiting was insufferable to me; read I could not, music was to me a torment, and the most common topics of conversation only increased my anguish. All at once the proverb came into my mind—

"That which burns the heel burns not the soul;"

and at the same time the hill of difficulty came before my inmost mind, and it seemed to me a particular refreshment to ascend this. I felt the necessity of calming the soul by the fatigue of the body; and with an advertisement out of the daily paper in my reticule, I rambled in mist and cold towards the South, up the heaven-aspiring mountain, far forth upon the endless street which begins upon the other side of the same. Our own state of mind often lends its colour to objects, but on this day my state of mind and the objects which met me had actually a deep sympathy. The advertisement led me to a dwelling where mould and damp covered the walls, neither was it to be wondered at that the pale dropsy abode there. On the long, ill-built street, I saw a herd of ragged, pale children, old women and aged men, living pictures of sickness, of poverty, and age; and I contemplated misery in all gradations of human life—in all its weeping shadows.

And amid all these shadow-figures there yet probably was not one who would have exchanged his lot with mine, if he could have seen into my heart. Ah! the severest kind of wretchedness is not that which exhibits its rags in the streets, and at night conceals itself in great deserted buildings—it is that which smiles in polite companies, which shews to the world a joyful exterior while sorrow gnaws its heart.

Had I been somewhat more joyous of mood, I might have thought with pleasure on the round earthen jugs which many carried in their hands, and on the warm soup which Mercy cooks by the never-extinguished fire, and which now these poor people were carrying, yet steaming, for their dinners.

When I came home, I hoped for some kind of word, of some kind of tidings.' But no, nothing! Several hours have passed. Perhaps Lennartson comes this evening.

Evening.

No, he came not. I have obtained by art news of Brenner. HE DID NOT GO HOME LAST NIGHT.

The 3d.

Again a sleepless night. It is again morning. Whither shall I go to-day?

"When a man is no longer his own friend, then goes he to his brother, who is so still, that he may talk gently with him, and may again give him life."

These words of Jean Paul awoke in me the desire to go to my Selma, but I was ashamed of the confession which I had to make to her. Then came she to me with her lovely eyes, and asked so tenderly, so troubled. I could do no other than let her look into my heart. And how tenderly she comforted me! How warmly she defended me from my own self-accusations! How clearly she saw before us the hour of reconciliation! Ah, I dare not hope for this! If I could only know how it now is with him, how he feels towards me.

Evening.

I know now. Lennartson came in the afternoon, but not gaily.

Yet it is good that he came. I could hardly have supported such another night. To my inquiring look, he said immediately—

"I have just seen Brenner; I have communicated to him our conversation here that evening."

"Well, then, and he—" asked I, almost lifeless.

"He said, he had himself imagined that some kind of misunderstanding must have been the occasion of—what he did not say."

"And besides that—said he nothing?"

"He added, if anybody had said to me anything bad of her, I should not have believed it."

"And that was all! Said he nothing more?"

"No!" said Lennartson; "but it was evident that he had suffered much in mind, and suffered still. What unfortunate misunderstanding has put you both so out of tune with each other, separated two beings who I fancied should—— but they are not separated. That is impossible. I know Brenner's heart. Give me a word, a cordial word for him, and—let me conduct him to your feet."

"Impossible! I pray you do nothing now in this affair. You would not wish that yourself, if you knew all. Tell me only—do you think that Brenner cherishes any hatred towards me?"

"Hatred is a feeling which cannot easily find place in Brenner's heart, and certainly never towards you. The words which he says of you, he speaks with seriousness and tenderness."

"Thus I may hope then that he does not abhor me. This is much. I thank you from my heart for your kindness."

"Thank me by letting me take with me a soothing greeting to my friend. He looked to me as if he had not slept for several nights, and would not be able to sleep for yet more."

"Tell him that neither have I slept, since—— and now let us not talk further on this affair. It belongs to the things which must alone depend upon our Lord's guidance."

Lennartson bowed with quiet seriousness, and as he saw me weep he took my hand, and spoke gentle words with the voice of an angel. O how good is he too!

It is Twelve at Night.

I am now calmer. I have arrived at certainty. It is then ended, this friendship which gave me so very much pleasure, which was to last into eternity, ended through my fault.

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I found in the stream of life a costly pearl, but I threw it heedlessly away. I deserved it not.

* * * * *

'If they had told me anything bad of her I should not have believed it.' What a crushing reproof for me is there in these loving words!

But I deserve all this. Therefore I will bear it all without complaint. I shall not sleep this night, perhaps not for many nights. Knew I only that he slept.

Without, it is restless. Clouds driven by the northern tempest fly over the castle. The lamps on the bridge and on the quay flicker; their light trembles in the agitated waters; one after the other is extinguished in the storm. Poor flickering flames, good-night!

The 7th.

Brenner has set out, on the business of the fleet,

to several of the sea-port towns of Sweden. He will be absent several weeks. That is good.

It is cold to-day, clear air and cold. The snow lies upon the ice of the Riddarfjerd, upon the southern mountains, white and still—still and cold as indifference. I will lay it upon my heart. Yet no! that will I not. Let it suffer still.

I was too proud of my philosophy, of my strength and prudence, and am—punished. Burn therefore thou holy pain, thou purifying fire; burn to the very roots this selfish, vain temper. Burn and consume!

In the Evening.

I shall overcome this suffering; I feel that I shall overcome it, for I have a clear inward presentiment that he has forgiven me, that he feels and thinks mercifully towards me. And for the first time I feel the necessity of the mercy and the compassion of a fellow-being. Such presentiments of the state of feeling of persons who are dear to me I have often had, as well in bad as in good, and they have never yet deceived me.

The sentiment which united Brenner and me has really not been of a common kind, nor can the overhastiness of a moment annihilate it. It is deeply based in the nature of our being. And I know it. Wilhelm Brenner, we shall yet once more meet and be united in sincerity, in harmony, even if it first be when the scene of this life is ended; I know it, and never have felt more certain than in this moment, when we are apparently more separated than ever.

I have written to Brenner. Words like those which I said here. They will meet him when he returns to Stockholm.

To-night the stars glow brighter. No cloud overshadows them. Good-night, Wilhelm! To-night thou wilt sleep, to-night I also shall sleep, and to-morrow I shall again wholly live for mankind, for the interests which surround me. Thou hast given to me an example of activity, and I will follow it.

The 11*th.*

And the drama which is being acted in my neighbourhood demands truly all attention. I seek still for the thread which can lead the captives out of the labyrinth; but that St. Orme is the Minotaur I see plainly; and it seems as if Flora's prophesying of herself, that she was possessed by his evil nature, was really about to be fulfilled. But why should Selma become her victim; why should the sylph lose her wings in the struggle? Selma has been for some time an actual martyr to Flora's perpetually unhappy temper, who seems to have a certain delight in tormenting her with ill-humour, with severity, and with absurd suspicions. Selma bears this with wonderful gentleness, but—the joyous song is silenced, and the light dancing gait becomes ever stiller.

Yesterday, I poured out before her the vial of my wrath against Flora.

"Forgive her," prayed Selma, with her beautiful tearful eyes, "she is herself so little happy!"

And this is true. My stepmother, who does not understand Flora's condition, but who would willingly see all around her joyful, endeavours to cheer her by all kinds of dissipations and pleasures; but these now appear to have lost all power over Flora, whilst her evil demon strikes his talons ever deeper into her life.

Towards evening, when the few visiters had left us, and we ladies of the family were together with St. Orme, Flora stood a long time sunk in thought before the portrait of Beatrice Cenci.

"Do you think of copying that lady, that you contemplate her so exactly?" asked St. Orme, in his scornful, disagreeable tone.

"Perhaps!" replied Flora, in a voice which sounded almost terrible. "Then," continued she in an altered tone, "I endeavour to fancy how she felt in mind."

"Before or after the murder of her father?" asked St. Orme as before.

"Afterwards," replied Flora. "Before, I understand; that I know."

"How, my sweet Flora, how can you enter into such horrible thoughts?"

"Yes, I can do so," replied Flora. "She had attempted every thing—every thing, St. Orme—to free herself from her unhappy condition; she did not express her pangs. She was reduced to the most extreme point, was reduced to despair—in short, I understand her deed; but after that—afterwards—"

"Why yes," rejoined St. Orme, "afterwards, she thought on the preparation for her own death, on the scaffold, on the executioner!"

"It is related," continued Flora, "that at the moment in which she went to death, at the moment when she must ascend the scaffold, a stream of words burst from her lips, so full of joy and thankfulness, so full of what is most beautiful and most sublime in the human soul, that they who should have consoled her were dumb, and their pity changed itself into admiration: it is said that never was her beauty more touching, her look more beaming than at the moment when she, as a penitent, but ransomed sinner, met death enfranchised and victorious!—nor is that a wonder to me. But I do wonder how she felt; ah! how she felt herself to be free! free and happy! I do wonder how she felt, I do wonder how she felt, I do wonder how—"

Flora repeated these words several times like an insane person, and sank suddenly to the floor.

Our astonishment was great. Flora was carried into Selma's chamber, and here our attentions soon brought her again to consciousness; but only to fall into a hysterical state, after which she only sunk into repose after the lapse of a few hours.

When she again awoke it was night. She lay still, her eyes fixed upon Virginia's portrait, that hung at the foot of Selma's bed (on which Flora lay), and said passionately to herself—

"She, too, was lovely and unhappy; she, too, died in the bloom of her age, died of a broken heart. But she died, killed by her still suffering—like many a woman, died without glory and revenge. Beatrice was the happier of the two."

"The Eternal Judge only knows that," said I, with gentle voice.

"Yes, what do we know?" continued Flora. "I know nothing, excepting that I am more unfortunate than these two. It is strange, but for some time methinks, that thoughts on a bloody action, on a murder, for instance, have something refreshing in them. A great change must take place in the souls of men who have done something terrible—something that admits of no return, no uncertainty, no fear, no hope more. Then, indeed, might the juggling spirit depart, and the human being comprehend himself! It might become calm and cool in the heart, when the hour of death is near, and all is past from earth; feelings might arise—feelings of humiliation and subjection, and then—there perhaps might come some angel of the Lord, and kindle a light in the dark soul ere one died. But thus

will man die! Die, be laid low in the black earth, moulder, turn to dust, be trampled of men —ha! no! no! I will not die. No. Why is it so dark within me? why do you let me lie as in a funeral vault? Bring me more light. And Selma! where is she? She used to love me. But she has left me, like all the rest!"

"Never! never!" replied an affectionate voice, and from the depths of the alcove, on the other side of Flora's bed's head, arose slowly Selma's white-garmented, beautiful figure. She took Flora's hand in hers, and besought with tears—

"O Flora, Flora! if you yet love me, hear what I have to say to you. You are day by day more unlike yourself; there lies some heavy secret at your heart which makes you unhappy. O speak, Flora, tell us what it is—tell us all! You know how we love you. How possible it will be for us to find out some means of consoling and calming you! Oh, confide in us! How free will you feel when you have opened your heart, and have become clear to those who love you!"

"Clear!" repeated Flora, "and if I were to open my heart, and it were to appear merely darker to you than before! Selma, how should you bear that?"

"Ah! I could bear all, except seeing you so unhappy and so changed as you are!"

"You think so," said Flora, "but you deceive yourself. You belong to the good, to the discreet, who abominate every thing that is unusual and eccentric, because they consider it bad, because they do not understand it. They cannot look the reality in the face without trembling; they do not love, except through illusions, which they have no strength to—but forgive me, I will not be severe. I myself need help and forbearance. Help me, you cannot, Selma, nobody can—but you can soften the struggle. And now—will you read something to me, something which will calm me? what have you there? The hymn-book! Read something from it, if you will. It is a long time since I looked into such a one."

As I left the two young friends, I heard Selma read, with a voice which she endeavoured to make firm,

How the whole earth reposes.

The next day Flora was better; but Selma's countenance bore the traces of a deeply-depressed mind. I proposed to her, after breakfast, to go up to the Museum to see some statues which had lately come there. She willingly consented, and that Flora declined the invitation to accompany was not unpleasant to me.

We had not been long among the noble works of art before I saw the young pupil of Ehrensvard become cheerful, and while contemplating the beautiful and the sublime, her soul freed itself from the burden which bowed it down. I acknowledge with joy how a cultivated taste for art or nature can release the human soul from the pang which is called forth by the pressure of circumstances, or by the excitability of the heart. Yet he cannot always be released from it, neither should he be. There are sufferings which are more elevating than all enjoyments, I mean nobler. These must not be annihilated. They may free us, they may give us wings. Even the larva of suffering can receive wings, can fly in the night, and be lighted by its stars, and bathe in its dew.

A soul-full, brightened melancholy displaced more and more the suffering, depressed expression of Selma's countenance, as my observations excited her to think and to express her thoughts.

At Niobe's statue I said, that Niobe appeared to me too unfeeling; I wished to see in her countenance more despair, more anger.

"She combats with higher powers," replied Selma; "neither revenge nor hope are possible to her. Besides, this is the first time that she knows misfortune; and it comes so suddenly, so mightily, that it overpowers her; she cannot suffer much, she is stunned. See! observe her from this side; see the expression of trembling pain about her mouth. One sees that there needs only one movement, only one arrow now, and she suffers no more; she is turned to stone."

I looked at Selma. There was at this moment a strange resemblance between Niobe's expression and hers. It seemed to me that thus would she suffer, thus turn to stone. But God defend my young sister!

At the antique head of Zeno; I said, "Do you not see in this countenance, as if it were a prototype of Christendom?"

"Yes;" replied she; "it is the renunciation, but without the exaltation."

She would not turn to stone, thought I again, with a look at her countenance beaming with soul, she would free herself, she would conquer herself. The sylph would not lose her wings for long.

We now heard somebody whispering near us—

"Lieutenant Thure does not go to the ball tonight. It is very vexatious."

"Nor the royal secretary, Von Bure, either. Yet he told me that he would come for my sake. But one cannot depend on the gentlemen. He had as good as engaged me for the first waltz. I will be properly ungracious the next time that he comes, and will render himself so civil."

"Yes, it seemed as if you had made a conquest——Do you not think that the marble head there is like Von Bure? Do you know what sweet thing he said to me last evening?"

The sweet thing was said so softly, that I did not hear it. We had already recognised Hilda and Thilda Engel, who were complaining of their lovers before the bust of Septimus Severus. They were now aware of us, and we mutually saluted each other. As it now began to be cold in the marble gallery, I proposed that we should take a walk towards the park, across the Skeppsholm, and we asked the Engels if they would accompany us. 'They would indeed, gladly, but——four ladies without one gentleman—how would that be?'

Selma and I assured them, laughing, that it would be excellent; especially if we went two and two; and we wandered off, each with an Engel (angel) by her side, but had considerable weariness therefrom.

Outside the park we met Mrs. Rittersvard and her daughter. They were cordially friendly, and so merry that it infected us. Mrs. Rittersvard was much better as regarded her health, and Helfrid was quite happy to be again after a long time in the fresh wood. It was glorious. The snow melted in the noon-day sun, the fir shoots gave forth fragrance, and lichens and mosses grew greenly fresh in the field, and on the tree stems. Helfrid was an old acquaintance of all these, and related in answer to Selma's and my questions, so much of their lives and peculiarities, as excited a great desire in our

minds to become better acquainted with these children of nature. In the mean time we wished Helfrid joy of this her knowledge and fresh spring of enjoyment.

But the Engels became ever more and more sullen, and I recognised in them that lamentable poverty of soul which our mode of education often fosters, and which often causes people, in the midst of treasures of art and nature, to have thought and memory only for a—ball lover. Thus were we now, six ladies, and—no gentleman! Fate was cruel to the poor children. Their looks animated themselves, however, as two young gentlemen, arm in arm, approached us, and I heard them whisper the names of Thure and Bure. But Thure and Bure greeted, and—passed by! The Engels looked desperate.

Again a gentleman approached us; and this one passed us not by, but, after an exclamation of joyful surprise and friendly salutation, accompanied us back to the city. It was Lieutenant Sparrsköld. But he walked beside Helfrid Rittersvärd. Hilda and Thilda walked with one another.

At a hint from her mother, Helfrid invited them and the rest of the party to go and drink a cup of chocolate in the shadow of her hyacinths. The Engels declined the invitation with a look of ill humour, but Selma, the young Sparrsköld, and I, accepted with pleasure the friendly invitation.

In the shade of Helfrid's fragrant hyacinths we drank excellent chocolate, and had a lively and interesting conversation on the way, of best improving and using life and time.

Nobody was better pleased to hear about this than the good old lady, who finds even now life to be so affluent and so full of interest, that she wakes herself every morning at six o'clock from fear of wasting time, which for her flies too fast.

Young Sparrsköld declared jestingly, that people did a great deal better to sleep; and with that kissed her hand with filial, yes, almost childlike tenderness.

Helfrid looked on both with tears in her eyes.

A horrible catastrophe changed this scene of love and goodwill, into one of horror. A dull pistol-shot was heard, and seemed to have been fired in the room under that where we were. Sparrsköld sprung up.

"It was in Captain Rumler's room!" exclaimed he; and, as if seized upon by a horrible foreboding, rushed from the room. A quarter of an hour after this he came up again, very pale. "Captain Rumler has shot himself!" All was already over with him. People had for some time talked of his deranged affairs, and of his inclination for strong liquors; he seemed already to have laboured at his own ruin. This was now accomplished.

Excited and horrified in mind, we separated.

"He was one of Felix's intimate acquaintance," said Selma, on our homeward way. "May he not—" She did not conclude.

It was terrible news with which we had now to surprise my stepmother.

The 13th.

Captain Rumler's unfortunate end quickly flew through the city. The Lady-Commissioners-of-Commerce informed us to-day that 'people said that he had handled too freely the money of the regiment; that he could no longer conceal this, and would not live over his disgrace; that one and another young gentleman, sons of rich families, who were involved in Rumler's affairs, had fled. People said that several occurrences similar to this would follow.'

From the misfortune, however, one good thing has arisen. Ake Sparrsköld was Rumler's next successor, and received the company after him. Nothing then hinders any longer his and Helfrid's union, and the happiness of the whole family.

The 14th.

Now also have the Rutschenfelts driven off! 'God preserve Felix!' with these words my stepmother entered at noon, and was so cast down by the news and so uneasy about its consequences, that all thoughts of startling me, and all the Metternich deportment, were forgotten.

Among those who have made their escape for debt, are the Mr. Bravanders (the same who on New-Year's-day challenged the devil so industriously to fetch them).

The 15th.

"Has Felix been here? Do you know anything of him?" asked Lennartson to-day, almost as he entered the lobby; and as we answered in the negative he appeared vexed, although he tried to conceal it. St. Orme, the Chamberlain, and a few other gentlemen, together with Lennartson, were here to dinner. The conversation soon turned to the Rustchenfelts again, who in part had taken flight, and in part were suspected of designing to take flight. Many persons were mentioned whom they had deceived, who had been robbed by them of the little which they possessed; families who were sunk in the deepest sorrow; mothers, brides, whose hope was annihilated, whose future was forever darkened. The old, venerable father of one of the fugitives had had a stroke in consequence of his grief—but it would be going too far to draw forth all the misfortune which was now passingly spoken of.

Lennartson was silent in the mean time, but I gave vent to my heart in a few excited words. St. Orme, who always sets himself in opposition to me, shrugged his shoulders at the tragical way in which people took such every-day affairs, the fuss which people made about a young man's youthful follies. He, for his part, pitied them sincerely, but he judged no man; people must not be too severe against the young. They must have time to run out their course; after this they returned to sense and prudence."

"That is very well said," remarked the Chamberlain, with a fine voice and fine satire, "and for my part, I will always say, 'the blessed (late) Rumler,' although I would not take an oath that the blessed man really is blessed; still I think that people should pay their debts and live decently in the world, and I think that it is rather venturesome to go over into the other, like Rum—like the blessed Rumler."

Lennartson now took up the affair, and with great seriousness; and fixing a quiet firm glance on St. Orme, he censured the conduct which had been described, and the temper of mind which could find it innocent. He described the operation of this on social life in general; he described a people in its decline—laxity of principle, its poisoned root—lust of pleasure and frivolity, taking the upper hand—the sanctity of a promise despised—order and honesty fled—with them confidence, security, readiness to oblige, all pure, all beneficial sentiments—all human ties poisoned—the sanctity and fresh gladness of life fled for ever. Thus was it with the old nations as they advanced towards their dissolution, to-

wards their ignominious tardy death, a spectacle for pity and contempt. Thus will it be with us, if we do not seize with earnestness on life and on ourselves. "I wish," continued Lennartson, while his eyes flashed and the words came like thunder from his lips, "I wish that all honest men would brand with their abhorrence, and the better part of social life with its scorn, all those idlers, those young deceivers, who sacrifice all for the satisfying of their bad passions. I know only one character more worthy of punishment, more despicable than these, and that is he who, under the guise of cleverness, poisons their principles; under the guise of friendship seduces to misery, while he makes them the instruments, the victims of his selfishness, of his low schemes—in one word, the snake in social life, the calculating seducer!"

Was it the intention of Lennartson to hurl a lightning flash at St. Orme, or was it the bad conscience of the latter which made him struck; but certain it is, that for the first time I saw him deprived of his scornful assurance, for the first saw him smitten and confused. The blood had vanished from his cheeks. He attempted to smile, but the thin lips trembled convulsively. Flora saw him with amazement, and a sort of enjoyment! She seemed to feast herself on his pangs. She laughed—hideously—there was a stillness as of death at the table, and at once my stepmother made the move to rise, although the dessert had not been served, and all followed with readiness.

St. Orme soon recovered himself; one heard him soon after laughing and joking with the Chamberlain, but his laugh was not natural. He soon left the company, after he had cast a crafty, poisonous glance on Lennartson.

When our guests were gone, we were all of us extremely out of tune. I endeavoured to fix my stepmother's attention by one of the questions of the day, but it did not succeed.

It succeeded much better with the "Lady Councillors of Commerce," who came full of news, which they were as desirous of imparting as we of hearing. It concerned for the most part the Rutschenfelt company, and the disorder and misery which the fugitives had left behind them; the causes of the ruin of young men were also spoken of—among these were often mentioned unwise parents, bad example, neglected oversight in youth. With all these sorrowful relations, Mrs. and Miss P. helped us through the long evening. During this, two messengers had been sent to inquire after Felix, but they had not met with him at home.

After people had separated for the night, Selma and I lingered, as we often do, among the pictures in the inner ante-room, and contemplated them by the soft lamplight. Selma stood long before a painting after Guido Reni, which represents St. Michael, who, with the flames of anger in his divinely beautiful countenance, plants his foot upon the breast of Satan, and pierces him with his spear.

"Why does my Selma look at this picture so long?" asked I joining her; "it has something quite horrible in it."

"But something quite beautiful also," replied she. "It teaches us to understand what a holy anger is. Look at St. Michael's countenance! Tell me, does it not remind you of—is it not like—" Selma paused, and crimsoned with confusion.

"Lennartson, as we saw him to-day," said I, ending her sentence, and Selma's look told me that I had expressed her thoughts.

We were now disturbed by some one who opened the door of the drawing-room. It was the figure of a man wrapped in a wide cloak. This was thrown off, and we recognised Felix Delphin. But how changed he was! The pale, disfigured countenance had scarcely a trace of its former beauty.

"Selma!" said he, with an agitated voice, "do not be afraid of me. I will merely say farewell to you, before—"

"Before what, Felix?"

"Before I leave thee and Sweden for ever! O Selma! I wished to see you once more, that I might pray you to think of me, and to pray for me when I am far from you!"

"Felix, why must you go?"

"Why, because I am—ruined, ruined by my weakness, by my folly. Property, health, honour, all are lost! I cannot, I will not live over my disgrace here."

"But is there no help? Cannot Lennartson—"

"No! Once before he rescued me from the hands of the usurer. Then I gave him my word of honour never again to be betrayed into them. I have broken this. Rather would I die than meet his look!"

"But I, but Flora! We are your nearest relations; we have some jewels—"

"Hush, good angel! I am not sunk yet so deep as to avail myself of—and besides, what purpose would that serve? Ah, Selma! all must now be ended between us. Here, have you your ring again. I am not worthy of you. Pray Lennartson to forgive me! Greet Flora! May she be worthy of him! And you, good angel—heaven bless you! Farewell!"

He kissed the folds of her dress, and was about to rush out, but was prevented by a man who stepped in the doorway and seized his arm with a stern—

"Whither, Felix?"

It was Lennartson. Felix gasped for breath, but in the next moment he made a violent effort to tear himself loose and to fly, but the Baron held him with a strong hand, and said sternly—

"Be quiet, boy! no stupidity! Will you make a scene before the people outside? Besides, this avails you nothing now. You now *must* follow me!"

"You will dishonour me!" stammered Felix, pale with impotent frenzy.

"*You* will dishonour yourself, but *I* will save you even against your own will," said Lennartson.

"It is too late!" exclaimed Felix.

"It is *not* too late," answered Lennartson. "I know all about you, and I promise to save you; and to this end I demand only one thing from you, that you at this moment enter into a bond with me, body and soul, and take not one step without my will or knowledge, but obey me in all things. And in the first place, I desire that you follow quite quietly to my carriage, which stands before the door."

Lennartson had said this with a low voice, as if he would be heard by Felix only, but the strong emphasis which he laid upon his words caused me, although I stood at a distance, not to lose one of them. Felix seemed annihilated; his will was subject to that of a mightier than himself, but he could scarcely endure himself.

He supported himself almost fainting against the wall.

"Lean on me," said Lennartson, quickly and tenderly, as he took the youth in his arms—"why are you afraid? Am I not your friend, your fatherly friend? Confide yourself to me! Come! be a man!"

Felix took courage truly at these words, and said mildly—

"Do with me what you will, I will obey."

Lennartson seeing that he hesitated, seized his arm, nodded to us kindly but deprecatingly, as we were about to call for help, and with a look which said 'be calm,' led the unfortunate young man away.

Selma threw herself into my arms agitated by excited feelings. I did not leave her through the night, which passed sleeplessly for us both, and I have written this in her chamber.

The 17th.

Felix is ill, but they say not dangerously. They have bled him, and Lennartson has watched by him through the whole night. Flora has also come this moment from him, and I am glad to see her really excited and uneasy about his condition.

In the Afternoon.

Lennartson has just been here, so good, so full of consolation! Felix's affairs are not nearly so bad as he himself imagined. A sudden influx of his creditors, who were alarmed by the flight of his friends, their threats, his entire want of money, together with his ignorance of the real state of his affairs, had occasioned his despairing determination. Lennartson was quite sure of being able to save him out of his embarrassments, although various difficulties were to be overcome.

As we expressed our vexation about the trouble and the time which this wretched business would cost, Lennartson said mildly—

"May Felix only allow himself to be saved by this grave warning! I will then not complain about that which has happened, neither on my account nor on his!"

"How good you are! How infinitely good you are! Ah, that Felix, and we all of us, could only once rightly thank you!" With these words, Selma turned herself involuntarily to Lennartson, with tearful and beaming eyes.

He seemed surprised, and his cheeks coloured as he said—

"Such words from Miss Selma? Can I deserve them? But I will do that, will do anything which in any way can contribute—to make you happy!"

There was melancholy in the earnestness with which he said this, whilst he took Selma's hand, and looked deeply into her eyes. But her eyelids sank hastily, and she grew pale, whilst she, as it were, retreated before his searching, warm glance. At this moment Flora entered, and threw upon both a look of flaming jealousy. Selma withdrew quickly. Lennartson was still and abstracted, and soon went away.

Flora then turned to Selma, and said cuttingly, "that was indeed a very affecting scene, which I disturbed! Might one inquire what kind of tender outpourings took place? Silent? It looks as if you were all in a compact against me. Selma blushes like a guilty person. You also Selma, you against me also? Yes, then stand I solitary, forsaken."

"Flora! Flora! No such words, if you will not kill me!" cried Selma, with the expression of the most violent pain, and rushed out.

"Flora!" said I, "you are really not deserving of such a friend as Selma."

"Let me be!" replied she, "I do not trouble myself about the whole world."

I followed Selma, and found her in the room, fallen upon her knees, and with her head bowed in her hands.

"Selma!" prayed I, "do not let Flora's absurd words go to your heart. You yourself know, and so do we all, how innocent you are."

"No! no!" exclaimed Selma, with vehemence. "I am no longer innocent! O Sophia, it is that which makes me unhappy. I am false towards her. I feel it now. Innocent, indeed, as to all intention, all wishes; but not as to all feelings, all secret thoughts. O Sophia, I am guilty!"

"That you are not!" said I confidently; and I now used all my eloquence to reconcile the young girl with herself. I made it clear to her that she could not annul Lennartson's connexion with Flora; nay, even that she might sacrifice her own happiness to promote that of the other. This Selma was obliged to concede, and she raised her head. Then I said to her that such a love as hers to such a man as Lennartson was not a sentiment of which any one need be ashamed. It was at the same time both noble and ennobling. And at last I hit upon a happy thought, that of representing myself as a rival of Flora's, but as an obdurate one, because no noble female mind could remain indifferent to manly worth and manly amiability like his; and I, on this ground, gave myself full permission to love Lennartson.

Selma could not help smiling at this, and smiling through tears, she threw her arms round my neck. I left her, reconciled in some measure to herself, to find Flora. She also was in her chamber; and as I entered I saw her hastily concealing in her bosom a small white bottle which she held in her hand; red and white alternated upon her cheeks. As I saw how deeply unhappy she was, I talked gently with her; spoke of Selma's purity and tenderness; of all our wishes to see Flora calm and happy. I prayed her with warmth to meet us, and to have confidence in us.

Flora listened to me with a depressed brow; and said all at once, with warmth—

"Sophia! I have been for some time fearfully unhappy! I am afraid of myself. There are moments when I am capable of anything merely to obtain the end—the end! Yes, if it then were merely at *an end*, for ever at an end! But I know—or more properly, I fear that which may come afterwards! Ah, that nothing can end! I am so weary! If you have any love for me, do not leave me much alone! I cannot then answer for myself. How the sun out there shines so whitely upon the snow, as if there were no confusion and darkness in the world. It is all one! Will you go with me to the Unknown? Perhaps she may have a composing word for me."

I was willing, and soon ready. We went. But as we neared the house of the Unknown, we found on the narrow path fresh fir-tree twigs strewn upon the snow; it led us to her door, which was fastened. The Unknown had the day before removed to

The death-still, fir-crowned couch,

in the Solna churchyard.

"This door closed also!" said Flora darkly, as we betook ourselves homeward. But now opened themselves the floodgates of my eloquence, and in the deep desire to comfort Flora, and in the strong feeling of what life has of great and good, I said many things—well, I believe. But people flatter themselves always in that way. It did not, however, fail entirely, for Flora listened to me calmly, and as we came towards home, she pressed my hand with a friendly, almost melancholy 'thanks, Sophia!' Yet she remained reserved as before.

Ah! I preach wisdom to others, and yet have acted unwisely myself; I try to give comfort, and yet there is no peace in my own heart. At home is disquiet. My stepmother shews coldness towards me, and yet I know not why.

Wilhelm! Thou with the rich, warm heart, thou who wast open to me at all times, at all times affectionate towards me, where art thou? O what a pang to have wounded thee, to have removed thee! For thee—at thy feet fall these burning, penitent tears. Thou hast never shed such;—well for thee!

The 23d.

Heavy, black days,—days in which life resembles a sleep, where nothing will go forward; not even self-improvement, which ought never to stand still! There hangs, as it were, a heavy cloud over us. Flora is, as usual, torn by restless spirits, and Selma is no longer what she was.

My stepmother is in an excited state of mind. I see plainly that the singular conversations which I have sometimes with one and another in the family, do not please her. She looks as if she suspected me of exciting commotions in the house.

Felix in the mean time is better, but his health appears deranged by the irregular life which he has led. He recovers slowly. Lennartson endeavours to animate his mind, and to cheer his spirits. He often spends the evenings in reading Sir Walter Scott's romances to him.

True are the words, 'nobody is so good as the strong.'

The 25th.

A little joy! 'Ake Sparrsköld and Helfrid Rittersvärd are declared betrothed!' With these words my stepmother startled me to-day, and was herself enlivened by the occurrence, which has given great pleasure to her good, old friend. My stepmother will, in order to celebrate this betrothal, give in the next week a soirée, which will redound to the honour of the house. Hereby she seems to wish to repress various unquiet reports respecting the affairs of the family which have begun to circulate, but as I hope—without foundation. But so long as St. Orme comes sneaking here, and has private conversation with my stepmother, I am not sure. Another bad sign is also that our 'spasmodic acquaintance' have not been seen here for some time.

The 29th.

The cloud sinks lower and lower; it becomes more and more twilight around us. My stepmother wished yesterday to have a new carpet in the great anteroom for her festival. The old one has long been disagreeable to her, and has besides this several spots; in one word she wished altogether to have a new and handsome carpet. But Selma opposed herself mildly, and said beseechingly, "Ah, let us have no great outlay just now, not till we see how our affairs stand!"

From this I remarked with terror that Selma (who manages the domestic economy of the house) cherished suspicions which she had hitherto concealed from me.

The Philosopher came in at that moment, and said in his gloomy voice—

"The bills, your honour," and laid a bundle of papers on the table. My stepmother threw an uneasy look upon it, and pushed it from her as she said to Selma—

"My sweet girl! look them through—I cannot do it now. It is horrible what a miserable voice Jacob has sometimes. He quite terrifies me—I confess that at times it makes me quite poorly."

Selma embraced her mother silently, took the accounts, and went with them into her own room. My stepmother was still and thoughtful. She leaned her head back on the sofa cushion, and there was something in her handsome pale countenance that went to my heart. It was late in the evening, and the lamp burned dim. Methought that shadows of care and anxiety gathered around her, and that thereby her face became ever paler, ever older. Quiet wishes for the repose of the grave, for all, pressed through my soul.

The 3d of April.

To-day after breakfast, as I was alone with my stepmother, she introduced the affair of the carpet. She could not bear the dirty spots. Besides this, we were to have on Wednesday an elegant musical soirée. How could one let such a carpet lie on the floor; what would people think of the family that could endure such a one? A new one should be purchased on this very day. I attempted to oppose it a little, spoke of the expense and of the superfluity of such an outlay, and so on; all with the greatest friendship and mildness; but my stepmother took it very ill, and exclaimed at once—

"I must pray you, my best Sophia, not to be at all troubled about my private affairs—and I wish also that in other cases you would not too much rule in my house. I have hitherto been able to rule pretty well and to provide for myself and mine, and I do not think I am quite incapable of doing so still. Emancipate yourself as much as you like, that I cannot prevent; but let me also have my freedom, I beseech of you!"

The absurdity of this sally excited and troubled me at the same time. I sate silent with tearful eyes, and was thinking whether and how I should answer, when we heard St. Orme's voice without in the hall. With a kind of shock my stepmother started and said to me, "tell him that I am not well, and that I cannot receive him," and with that she hastened into her room.

"Alone!" exclaimed St. Orme, as he entered, "where are the others to-day? I come to say farewell to you for a few weeks. I am intending to go to W——s for a little fresh air and hunting. But I am afraid you will certainly miss me very much?"

I was silent. Jest I could not now, and I could not say to him seriously, as I thought, "it pleases me indescribably that you are going away."

"You are silent!" continued St. Orme, "and who is silent consents, it is said. Where are the other ladies? Will they remain invisible to-day?"

"My stepmother is unwell and can see no one," replied I; "Flora is gone to her brother, and Selma is otherwise engaged."

"Then it looks as if we should have a *tête-à-tête*," continued St. Orme. "I have no objection, because I have one or two things to say to you. Listen, my best cousin! I have several reasons to believe that you are not of the best service to me in this house. What have you against me, if I may ask? Perhaps I have not been polite enough to you, have not flattered you enough? In the mean time, I advise you as a friend, not to intrigue against me, you have '*affaire à trop forte partie*;' you would do better to come over to my side, and persuade Flora to consent to that which she cannot escape."

"I do not understand you," answered I, somewhat proudly, "neither do I understand intrigues; but I mean always to speak out openly my honest thoughts when any one asks for them, and neither flattery nor threats shall prevent my doing so."

"Superb, and Finnish in an especial manner," said St. Orme, as he looked at me, with a cold, sarcastic mien, which would have confused me, if it had not operated in the contrary manner, namely, steeled me. "I see how it is," continued he a moment afterwards with contemptuous coldness, "and I will tell you how it will be. All your Finnish magic arts will be in vain, and the conquest will remain mine yet. Adieu! many greetings. Forget me not!" With this he seized my resisting hand, and shook it with a malicious, triumphant look.

Flora entered at this moment, and her suspicious mind saw a friendly alliance in that which was almost the contrary. She cast some lightning glances upon St. Orme and me, and turned her back to him as he approached her. He then said coldly—

"Adieu, belle cousine! au revoir!" and went.

"How! have you and St. Orme become suddenly such good friends?" asked Flora, as she approached me with almost a wild look. "Have you made a compact with him to betray me? Confess it, confess it honestly, Sophia! You do not wish me to be Lennartson's wife, you consider him too good for me; you wish him to have another. Deny it not! People do not so easily deceive me, and I have seen through you for a long time. But to enter into complot with St. Orme—I did not think that you would have carried your hatred to me so far."

This new injustice caused me more pain than anger. I said warmly, "O Flora, how unjust you are to me! But you are unhappy, and I forgive you."

With these words I went out of the room.

I found that it was my destiny to-day to be misunderstood at home, and felt a certain longing to go out. I dressed myself therefore, and went.

It was as if the heavy cloud which had rested so long above me now sent down all its lightning flashes upon my head. It seemed to me that I must resemble the scapegoat, and should be burdened with other people's faults and failings; a thousand excited feelings boiled in my breast, till I came out of the city-gate, and felt the air breathe cold upon my brow.

The spirit of spring had breathed upon the earth, and it thawed strongly,—foot passengers walked carefully upon the melting ice; glittering drops fell from the roofs. The heaven was the colour of lead; but here and there opened themselves the eyelids of the clouds in order to send forth some pale beams of light, which resembled smiles in tears. The air was still and somewhat heavy, but there was a twittering of hundreds of little birds which played in the leafless trees, and these had I know not what strange odour, which reminded me of the sea, and of fir woods, and was full of spring life. I remained standing on the field covered with trees which is directly opposite to the castle, and drank in full draughts of the spring-air, listened to the rushing of the river, and let my eyes contemplate the manifoldly changing world. Then was it to me as if the spirit of the heaths of Finland blew upon me, and awoke the child-feeling in my soul. Clouds and mist fled, and like singing larks, uprose the bright, the great thoughts which make life beautiful. Conscious purity exercised itself strong in victory, and—in one word, I was as if changed.

I know not whether it is—as one of my friends says—'better to be a magic spirit than nothing;' but certain is it, that there lives in me somewhat of that magic nature which, from the very ancient times, is said to have its home in my native land. This *something* I do not comprehend myself, but I feel it as a *something wonderful*, a momentarily upflaming strength, which *will* and which *can*. In such moments nothing is impossible to me. I am conscious of a power to loose and to bind the spirits of others. *Primeval words* stir within me; yes, there are moments when I feel that I can enchant human souls to me, and—I do it! In my younger days, I had much of this heathenish magic. This since then has been baptized in the spirit-waves of suffering, christened in the fire of love; but rooted out it is not, and it arises in me sometimes quite unexpectedly. I know that it has played me many pranks; but I know also, that when reason has not helped me, magic has, and has given to me both words and songs, to sing myself free from the chains of life, and has enabled me, like the old Wäinemoine, to sing both sun and moon into the thread of my life. And there are moments in which I can turn every stick which may lie as an impediment in my path into a winged steed, upon which I can ride out of the narraw chimneys of life—not exactly to Blakulla—but forth into the free, fresh, blue space.*

The difficulty in such life-strong moments is the not having any difficulties to overcome, no impediments to conquer, no hero deeds to achieve. That was my sorrowful condition. Because to seek out and purchase a splendid carpet to lay at my stepmother's feet, a carpet with a heaven-blue ground, strewn with stars, flowers and magic figures, would require no magic power. In the mean time I felt a delight in it; and whilst in spirit I pleased myself with overcoming St. Orme, Flora, and the whole world, and wrote letters to all my friends—for it is astonishing what I do at such times—I wandered without any plan on the quay by the river, and saw the ice-blocks break up on the Riddarfjärd, and the heaven softly clear itself over the liberated waters. Downwards along the river parterre my 'spiritus' led me, and towards the side where the waves boomed most mightily.

Ah! it was there where I once stood with Wilhelm Brenner, heard the waves rage in his

* In case this manuscript should fall into the hands of strangers, I will herewith expressly declare, that this must not be taken literally.

breast, and saw a heaven clear itself in his eyes. And these remembrances seized on my soul with painful power,—but—gracious heaven! Was it indeed true? Was it he who again stood there, leaning over the iron railing, and looking down into the foaming deep? It was *he!* One look was sufficient to convince me of it, and I softly approached him. The magic arose again within me. I knew that he could not escape me, knew that I at this moment should have power over him. What I felt, of life and will and warmth within me, no words could express; but all this I laid in my hand, and I laid it softly upon his arm. He started up as if touched by an electric spark, and looked strong and full into my face. I looked quietly at him, and merely whispered—

"Wilhelm!"

He continued to look at me, but his glance changed; it became inexpressibly heartfelt, and with a sigh from the depths of his soul, he said,

"Sophia, is it thou!"

And we were *thou* and *thou*, for we were wholly one at this moment.

Again he said slowly and softly, "is it thou, Sophia? It is a long time since I have seen thee."

"Art thou still angry with me?" asked I, and my tears fell, for I saw by his countenance that he had suffered.

"I cannot be so," answered he, "I cannot be so if I would. Thoughts on thee soften my soul, and when thou lookest on me thus with thy clear, lovely eyes, then methinks that all is good. Thou knowest thy power well, Sophia."

"O Wilhelm! then we are friends, friends for ever. It cannot indeed be otherwise if my faults do not part us. I never had a brother, but I have wished very much for one. Be to me a brother!"

He answered not, but looked at me mildly, although gravely.

But I was happy in this mildness, so happy to have again found my friend, and to be able to feel again the strong inward harmony which united us, that I regarded this new compact as ratified, and talked to him of it out of the fulness of my heart, how it had been between us, and how it yet would be; of the exalted strength and sweetness of friendship; of its power to ennoble the heart and to beautify life. He heard me calmly, but he replied not. At length he cut short the discourse rather abruptly by saying,

"Hast thou been comfortable at home, since I last saw thee? How do Lennartson and Flora go on? What is St. Orme doing?"

I was happy to open my heart to Brenner, and to be able to tell him what it had endured during his absence. When he heard of St. Orme's behaviour and threats, the Viking raged, and was about to leave me, in order to call him to account.

"He has left Stockholm," said I heartily, "and does not return for some time." 'Take counsel of the storm how to still the tempest,' said I to myself, whilst the Viking grumbled at St. Orme for his intrigues, and at Flora for her want of integrity, and with me for not having cleared up the business, and for not having earlier communicated to him an affair which so nearly concerned Lennartson.

"Now there again," thought I, "I shall always be blamed for misfortune."

"The only thing," continued Brenner, "which consoles me is the secret persuasion that it would be good for Lennartson if he were well rid of Flora. She is at bottom not at all suitable for him, and I am very much deceived if he do not himself feel this, and secretly, in the depths of his heart, incline to another—what thinks Sophia? Is not thy sister Selma the one whom he loves, and who, according to my thoughts, is formed to make him happy?"

I could do no other than tell Brenner, that I had secretly his suspicions and his wishes; but Flora lay near to my heart. The rich gifts of her soul, her excited and unhappy condition, had fettered me to her.

"When St. Orme comes home again—" said Brenner. He did not end his sentence, but I heard in the depths of his soul that he would compel him to speak out for good or bad.

We were now by my home, and as we were about to separate, I said beseechingly to the Viking—

"Thou wilt come again to us, to me, my brother Wilhelm?"

"Yes! I will come."

"When!"

"When thou wishest it."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow!"

"Thanks!"

He pressed my hand kindly and warmly as before, and with a happier and lighter heart than I had had for a long time, I hastened up to my room, that I there in stillness might sing Te Deum out of the fullness of my soul.

I then thought about establishing peace with my stepmother; but for this purpose I must go to work in a diplomatic manner.

People who are intrinsically good always speedily repent of the violence and unreasonableness into which their tempers have misled them; and I now know my stepmother sufficiently to be certain that she was vexed with herself for her excess towards me, and would gladly make the *amende honorable*, if this were only consistent with her character and her dignity. To come to her now with the new carpet would have been to humiliate her; she could not have borne this and her own injustice The affair must be managed in another way.

I went down, therefore, and, as if nothing had happened, entered the room where my stepmother was sitting on the sofa with a gloomy and annoyed looked, whilst Selma sat reading in a window, and presented myself unaffrighted, as in great want of some black silk for my dress.

"I certainly believe that I have some of the same kind," said my stepmother, rising up hastily from her sofa, and going to her drawer, where several pieces of black silk soon showed themselves, which she, with the most friendly zeal, besought me to take and use. And I allowed myself to take them, together with some beautiful black lace, which I did not want, but which my stepmother, in the warmth of her heart, felt a necessity of giving to me; herewith she ended with a little gratuitous treatise on prohibitive-measures, luxury, and national economy; and of this I also obtained more than

I wished. But I was in a grateful state of mind, and received this like the rest, as was right.

As now my stepmother was become so considerably lighter by articles of luxury and learning, I could without any scruple burden her with the carpet; but I determined to wait with it till the next morning. I was now for myself satisfied with the position of affairs, and thought that my stepmother was so too, and betook myself, with peace, to my own room. It was, therefore, a surprise to me as I saw my stepmother enter, and heard her say with the most amiable kindness, and with tears in her eyes—

"I must beg Sophia to forgive my violence this morning: I cannot tell how I could be so disagreeable. But thou knowest well that thy old mother does not mean so ill, though she is sometimes irritable when many things weigh on her temper. In the mean time, I can hardly forgive myself—"

This was, in truth, too much, and I was very near falling at my stepmother's feet in deep reverential feeling. We, however, sank merely into each other's arms, but never rested we with more heartfelt affection on one another's breast; or, more correctly, that was the first time that we ever had so rested. I was deeply excited, according to my ancient usage on such occasions. My stepmother was less so; but she spoke well and beautifully of herself and her failings, and of our duty in all ages of life to amend our faults; she thought on this subject with Madame Genlis—"I cannot bear to hear elderly people say, I am too old to mend. I would rather forgive young ones if they said, I am too young! Because, when one is no longer young, one must especially labour to perfect oneself, and to replace by good qualities what one loses in the agreeable."

I did justice inwardly to my stepmother and Madame de Genlis,* and noted down the words for my own account; and satisfied with one another, and somewhat satisfied with ourselves, my stepmother and I parted.

The 4th.

The carpet was spread out this morning by the servants of the house, and received my stepmother as she came in to breakfast. She was as much surprised and pleased as I could have wished, and Selma regained her former temper, and danced before her mother upon the stars and flowers of the carpet.

This little scene has diffused some look of joy through the house.

'By presents and exchange of presents is friendship cemented,' says one of our prudent old bards.

My stepmother is now full of joyful thoughts respecting our soirée on Wednesday evening, and has desired us, the daughters of the house, to make a handsome and elegant toilet.

April 5th.

The Viking has received the command of the frigate Desirée, which sails in spring to the Mediterranean. He remains out perhaps two years. This news startles me. Why will he —yet perhaps it is best so. In the mean time it is hard to me.

* But I beg pardon of my stepmother and Madame de Genlis, it is Madame de Sevigné who has said these good words in one of her letters.

The 8th.

Yesterday was our soirée, and right beautiful it was and turned out well. Flora, who since St. Orme's absence has seemed to breathe more freely, had again one of her times of beauty and bloom. She was dressed as when I saw her at first, in crimson gauze. Selma in light blue crape, and I in white muslin and lace. My stepmother contemplated us with pleasure as we assembled ourselves in the room before the guests came, and was proud of her daughters, whom she called *les trois Graces*, and said that I looked 'vestal-like.'

A quantity of beautiful flowers adorned the room—it was right festal and beautiful. The new carpet glowed under our feet, and warmed my stepmother's heart.

Such an evening has its fate, like every thing else in the world; and if it be not worth while to place much importance upon it, still it is pleasant if the fairy of joy and not of *ennui* holds the sceptre.

A great deal depends upon whether any one in the company can or will take the magic staff in hand; and the sylph did that this evening, and continually spun her invisible flowery chains around the company. As my stepmother herself received all the guests in the inner ante-room, all collected themselves there, and it was much crowded and very hot. Selma therefore took the arm of Helfrid Rittersvärd, and proposed to her and some other young ladies, that 'they should go and found a colony' in the other ante-room. They emigrated, and others of the company soon followed them, so that the colony, as Selma jestingly remarked to her young friends, flourished very much in a short time. Gentlemen and ladies did not divide themselves into separate herds as is the usual and wearisome way in our northern assemblies, but joined in little circles, and endeavoured mutually to be agreeable to each other, and a lively and a noisy conversation arose. That we had with us some literary and scientific notables, some 'lions' (N. B. of the noblest breed), added importantly to the splendour of the evening. My stepmother was brilliant. Helfrid Rittersvärd and her bridegroom looked inwardly happy, and her agreeable, easy, and calm demeanour diffused as usual gladness around her. A skal for her was proposed by my stepmother at supper, and was drank with solemnity.

Flora's sister, the 'beauty,' looked this evening uncommonly little of a beauty. One saw plainly that the charm of her youth was over, and that the time approached when people would say 'she does not please me.'

For my part I never thought much of Flora's sister, and I never found that she had more than two thoughts in her soul, 'the theatre and dress.' But there dwelt this evening on her countenance an expression of dejection and secret pain, which made me seek her out when she withdrew from the animated drawing-room into my stepmother's room, which was merely lighted by a shaded lamp and adorned with white flowers. In this pretty blooming little world sate the fading 'beauty,' supporting her brow upon her hand. I spoke friendly words to her, and my voice must have testified of my sympathy, for by degrees she opened her inmost heart, and this had now interest for me.

"I feel," said she, among other things, "that I have sacrificed too much to the world. The world and mankind are so thankless! I have wished too much to please people. This will now no longer succeed. Now that I am no longer young, nor rich, nor have any longer that which pleases or flatters them, they withdraw themselves and leave me alone, and I—I know not whither I should turn myself. Methinks the world grows dark around me—I feel as it were, a fear of spectres — it is so empty, so desolate—I have nothing which interests me —the days are so long—I have *ennui!*"

The bitter tears which followed these words, expressed more strongly even than words the lamentable in the condition of the complainer. And what, indeed, is heavier to bear than the emptiness of life? What, indeed, is more horrible than that twilight in life, without a star in heaven, without one single little light on earth?

But if one cannot kindle for oneself such a little light? If one can borrow no fire from a good neighbour? Ah! light and warmth, objects of interest, activity and joy, present themselves so abundantly in life, that nothing is more difficult for me to comprehend than that any one can suffer from *ennui.* One must in that case be bound hand and foot, and then one must be released by friendly hands! And a liberated soul, to whom life presents itself in its beauty and its greatness—how glorious!

Like a balloon filled with the air of life felt I at this thought, ready to ascend up aloft, and to carry the Beauty with me on the journey—to the sun. I began to talk (as I thought, particularly like the Book of Wisdom) about life and its objects, about mankind and social life, of the relationship of the individual to the whole, and so on; and then turned from this to the particular sphere of life of my auditor, and proposed to her that she should adopt a couple of orphan children, and educate them for good and happy human beings.

The Beauty on this looked at me with a pair of large astonished eyes; "she really had never thought of that," said she, rather coldly, and as if a little affronted at the proposition.

I then spoke of interesting oneself in public institutions; of the happiness and honour of managing such benevolent establishments, and thus to benefit society by their life and activity. I mentioned my wishes and schemes of living active in this manner; I spoke of one worthy object, of the excellent institution for the care of outcast children, and proposed to the Beauty in my zeal, that the next day she should go with me to visit it. Then for the first time I became aware of her looking at me with a countenance that seemed to say, 'is this person actually insane?' and I then observed too that I had strained my sails too high. Half smiling at myself, I endeavoured to direct my course towards regions which lay nearer to the sphere of the Beauty; but I found her to be so strange and stiff towards everything which appeared to me beautiful and cheerful, that I felt myself quite without counsel, and only began to breathe freely when I saw the Chamberlain approaching us. With the zeal with which a person turns from an enemy to a friend, turned herself the Baroness Bella from me to my uncle, and acknowledged with animation all those politenesses which he shewed towards her, and among the rest, that he had lent her his box for the last representation of Norma. "I am so full of gratitude," I heard her say to him.

"Ah, my best cousin," replied he in his jocular tone, "it would be a deal better if you were full of chandeliers! For I just now need such for one or two rooms, and I know not where to get any that are suitable."

The Baroness Bella answered laughing, "that although she herself was no furniture-magazine, yet she could give him the address of one where he could get quite divine chandeliers."

The Chamberlain was indescribably glad to be able to get 'divine chandeliers,' and was still more glad to be enlightened by the glance and taste of the Baroness Bella. A party was arranged for the next morning to see the chandeliers, and with a side-glance at me, my uncle besought the Beauty to make use of his box at the opera for the next *abonnements-day.* She became still fuller of gratitude, and he still fuller of politeness; I felt more and more superfluous during this *tête-à-tête*, and left them somewhat melancholy—but a little amused also.

I returned to the remainder of the company. The Viking was there, but in a grave and almost gloomy humour; he talked with nobody, and did not approach me. That grieved me; the more so as I had not seen him since I had heard of his approaching and adventurous journey. I would gladly have said something to him, but had not the courage. I had this evening no magic tokens in me, but was merely quite an ordinary woman. I saw by the look of the Viking that it was stormy within him, and that made me afraid.

They asked me to play something, and as I seated myself at the pianoforte and saw Brenner approach, it occurred to me that I could converse with him in sound, and in this way would say to him what I could not clothe in words. I selected, therefore, one of Felix Mendelssohn's "Lieder ohne Worte," whose character is, that under suffering and combat it expresses a something victorious, ascending; a song, a poem, the peculiar beauty of which has always deeply spoken to my soul. I played too with my whole heart, and wished to infuse into Brenner the feelings which animated me, and to elevate us both above earthly struggles and earthly sufferings. And I thought that he knew, that he understood me.

Lennartson, Selma, and several others had assembled round the piano, and listened to the music. When I had ended, Brenner's honest glance met mine. Lennartson said to him—

"That piece reminds me of the history of your Egyptian vulture, Brenner! Tell it us, and Miss Adelan shall say whether it do not contain the words of this song."

Brenner now related—

"It was in Egypt, near to Thebes. I rambled one morning out into the surrounding desert to hunt, and happened to see a vulture sitting not far from me, among the ruins of fallen monuments. This bird is known for its strong power of life, and is dangerous to approach when it is wounded; it has a strength almost incredible. I shot at him, and hit him on the breast, and as I believed mortally. He remained, however,

sitting quietly in his place, and I rushed to him that I might complete my work, but in that same moment the bird raised itself, and mounted upwards. Blood streamed from his breast, and a part of his entrails fell out, but notwithstanding this he continued to ascend still higher and higher, in wider and wider circles. A few shots which I fired after him produced no effect. It was beautiful, in the vast silent wilderness to see this bird, mortally wounded and dyeing the sand with his blood, silently circling upon his monstrous wings higher and ever higher; the last circuit which he made was unquestionably a quarter of a mile in extant; then I lost sight of him in the blue space of heaven."

"Ah, my stars! To have been in Egypt," now said the Chamberlain with his refined voice, "and to have seen vultures and crocodiles, and such things there! That must have been very interesting."

"Ah! tell us something more about Egypt and the crocodiles there," exclaimed little Miss M.

"Is social life cheerful in Egypt? And how do they carry on conversation?" asked the royal secretary Krusenberg.

I do not know how Brenner answered these attacks, for I left the circle as they began. During the course of the evening we did not come together again, but I saw by his looks, which were often directed to me, that his heart was full; and so, to say the truth, was mine likewise. Brenner's approaching journey, the images which the music and the history of the vulture had called up, agitated me powerfully.

Was it a secret wish of us both, or was it chance merely, I know not in the least—but when all the guests had taken leave, and my stepmother, with Selma and Flora, had accompanied the last out, and now tarried with them in the hall in conversation, Brenner and I found ourselves alone in the white-flowered boudoir. We stood both of us silent; he excited, I embarrassed and depressed.

"Thou wilt take a journey," said I, at length.

He answered not.

"It will be a great journey," said I again; "wilt thou be long away?"

"Yes!" replied he, with half-suppressed vehemence. "Yes, I shall remain away a long time. I journey because it is too stifling for me, too confined for me, at home; because I must hence, to where I no longer see, no longer hear thee!"

He seized my hand and pressed it upon his eyes, and I felt that it was bathed with tears. "Oh!" continued he, "this is childishness! But let me dream for a moment! It will soon be past. Be not afraid, Sophia! I will, I wish nothing more than to see thee for one moment and to be happy in loving thee, and that I *thus* may love thee, although thou hast rejected me. I never loved any one better; I have been happy in the feeling, in the foolish hope that thou shared it with me, that we were made for each other, that thou wouldst wish——but it is past! And after this, my love, near thee, would be my torment. When the storm in my breast has laid itself to rest, I will return to my children and to thee. Think of me when I am far from here—think that my heart belongs not to those which thou mayest despise! Weep not; I do not complain. I wish not to have loved thee less. Upon the waves of the ocean, or in the deserts of Africa, I shall feel myself rich in this love. Wish me not freed from it if thou wishest me not a misfortune. I shall love thee now and for ever. I challenge thee to let it be otherwise, but—it is the last time I shall speak to thee on this subject. And now farewell! Farewell, *my* Sophia! God bless thee!" And before I was able to bethink myself, he had embraced and——left me.

That was a tempest. I was not calm after it; I was not calm for a long time. But if he have found peace upon his stormy sea, I should be satisfied that——

The 15th.

It is many days since he has been here. That is sad, but I dare not murmur. He does that which is right and manly. This tender but proud heart will not complain, will not shew its wound; but like the bird of the wilderness, will conceal itself and its pangs in the open, lofty space, where no human eye comes near. He is high and noble-minded, but I—?

A peace pervades the house which we have not known for a long time. This is occasioned by Flora's more calm and cheerful state of mind. But how long will this continue?

The 19th and 20th, in the Night.

Yesterday Flora was rather unwell, and on that account staid at home from a dinner-party, where my stepmother went with Selma. I have a peculiar friendship for invalids; think that they are my children; and treat them in a manner under which they commonly prosper. It was therefore a little pleasure to me to stay yesterday with Flora, and whilst I tenderly and jestingly took the care of her on myself, and we spoke of various horrible things in our great hatred, our hearts neared each other more than they had ever before done. In the afternoon I read aloud to her while she lay upon the sofa in the inner ante-room. As I made a pause in the reading in order to rest myself, Flora said—

"You are quite too good, Sophia. And if I were but good, that is to say, if I were calm and satisfied, then perhaps I should be able to thank you as I now cannot.——I am not a bad person, but——but one may be driven out of oneself, one may become insane, if one be hunted and followed as I have been for some time. Have you not observed a great change in me in the last few days? That is because my pursuer has left me at peace. I have known nothing about him for some time; I do not understand ——can it indeed be possible that he has left me for ever?—that I am liberated? Ah, that it might be so! You should see a new——"

"How is it here?" inquired a clear, friendly voice; and Signora Luna shewed her face at the door. She is always a welcome guest, and though I now wished her in the moon because she had interrupted a conversation which had a great interest for me, still she was received as usual, and threw herself comfortably into a corner of the sofa, and continued with friendly talkativeness.

"It is rightly pleasant to me that I find you two alone, because I shall sit myself down here for the afternoon, and talk about one thing and another which lie at the bottom of my heart.

Do you here at home know what report is circulating through the city?"

"Of what? of whom?" inquired I.

"Of Flora. People say that she is to marry St. Orme, and accompany him to Constantinople, where he goes in spring as minister. Can it be possible?"

"I truly do not know;" said I, with a glance at Flora.

Flora turned pale. "The rattlesnake is near!" whispered she, "I hear him coming."

"Ah! why should not people know things which pass before their eyes?" said Countess G——, half impatiently and half jestingly; "when all things come round then Flora does not herself know whether she be betrothed, and with whom. But what I know is, that I will do all in my power that report may have said that which is untrue. Flora is my own cousin, and I love Flora, and I do not wish her to be unhappy, and unhappy she will be with St. Orme. He is a bad fellow; that I know. He sacrificed his first wife, and he will do the same by the second too—depend upon me—there is nothing which drags down both soul and body more than an unhappy marriage."

With this the beautiful eyes of the Countess G—— were filled with tears.

At that moment we heard the doors violently opened, and proud steps go through the room, and the great Alexander soon entered the apartment where we were sitting. After he had shortly greeted Flora and me, he turned towards his wife, and said with a domineering air—

"I fancy, my friend, that you heard me say this morning that I wished you not to go out this afternoon, but be at home when I came from dining at L——'s."

"Ah, my best friend, I had quite forgotten that. I did not know that the affair was so important."

"Important! It is not my custom to say anything without good reason, and what I said this morning I had well considered, and had sufficient motive for. The determination of a man cannot be deranged by the whims of a woman, and therefore I hope you will be so good as to follow me home immediately."

"My best Alexander, let me stop here quietly, as I am come here. I sit so excellently, and—I have something of importance to talk with my friends about. I will come home to you when this is ended. Let me for once do in the world as I wish."

"Not at all! you will be so good as to accompany me immediately. And if you will have a good reason for it, see here, *I will it!* tout simplement."

"But I also have a will," exclaimed Signora Luna with suddenly kindling energy, whilst her eyes flashed like actual moonstones, "till now it has lain asleep, but if you teach me to use it, it may become stronger than yours. And now I *will* stop here, and not go hence till *I* will. And if you agree not to this separation, I shall soon seek a longer!"

The great Alexander was evidently greatly confounded by this sudden outbreak of will and passion in his usually passive wife. He appeared to be afraid before it, and murmuring something about 'ladies' absurdities and caprices,' he withdrew.

Scarcely was he gone, when Lennartson came. Countess G—— wished not to see him in the excited state in which she was, and went therefore into another room. There she said to me, after she had composed herself—

"It will be the best that I go away after a little while. I wish not to annoy him in earnest, but only to shew him that he must not go too far with his power. There is much that is good in Alexander, and there would have been much more had he not busied himself so much with Aristotle. Aristotle and logic have quite bewildered him. It is no use such men liking to humiliate women; then they are directly tyrants, and I shall shew Alexander—but go in, Sophia, methought Flora looked anxious as you came out; go in, and do not trouble yourself about me;—I will go my way softly and quietly when I think that it is time, for he must wait a little while; afterwards—but go in, go in!"

I followed the injunction, curious to see what took place between Lennartson and Flora.

When I came in, Flora was reading a letter which Lennartson seemed to have given her, and he stood in the window with his serious eyes inquiringly fixed upon her. She was quite pale, and said at the moment in which she laid down the letter—

"I cannot read it—it is black before my eyes! Read the letter aloud to me, Lennartson; Sophia may willingly hear all!"

Lennartson took the letter and read aloud with a firm voice. It contained a warning to Lennartson not to form any connexion with Flora, together with an exhortation to break off such a connexion in case it were formed. Flora was already bound by the *ties of love and honour* to another, and proofs of this would be made public if this exhortation were not attended to. The writer would unwillingly resort to extremities; and if Lennartson quietly withdrew from Flora, then everything which could impeach her should be buried in silence. The letter was subscribed 'Anonymous,' and was written evidently in a feigned hand.

No longer in a condition to control herself, Flora exclaimed with frenzy—

"Mean, crafty, detestable St. Orme!"

"Then it is *he!*" said Lennartson, with a flaming glance, "it is he who is this disturber of peace! I have suspected it long; and now, Flora, now I *will* know what right, what ground he has for doing so. This hour must end our connexion, or cement it for ever. I have more than once besought for your full confidence—to-day, I must *demand* it."

"You shall know all," exclaimed Flora, with determination—"and you shall be my judge. But, O Thorsten! remember that even God's highest judgment is—mercy!"

Lennartson made no reply; he sate grave and dark, and seemed to wait for Flora's confession.

"Well, then," replied she, whilst she seemed powerfully to compel herself, "all then may be said. This St. Orme, when he was in Stockholm five years ago, paid his homage to me, and acquired—a certain power over me. His bold confidence, his talents, his powers of mind, which I then regarded as quite extraordinary, made an impression upon me. I fancied that I loved him. He misused my blindness, my in-

experience, in order to seduce me into an exchange of letters, and the promise of eternal love and the like. St. Orme however troubled himself but little in the fulfilment of the promises which he made to me. I was at that time poor; and he left me for a journey to Paris, whence for a long time I heard nothing of him. In the mean time I became acquainted with you, Lennartson, and learned what real love is. I regarded myself as forgotten by St. Orme, and forgot also him and my childish, foolish promises. Ah! I forgot the whole world, when you, Lennartson, offered me your heart, and life dawned for me in new beauty. But I was now rich, and St. Orme came again and asserted his old pretensions. He had forgotten Flora, but he called to mind the heiress. And I knew well that he sought not after my heart, but after my property; I loved him no longer, but—but I was obliged to conciliate him and to operate in kindness upon his hard heart, in order to obtain those imprudent, unfortunate letters which he had in his power, and which he dishonourably threatened to produce against me, if I did not break off my engagement with you, and consent to give him my hand. See, then, Lennartson, the secret, the many months of darkness, contention, and opposition, of my existence. I hoped for a long time to be able to conquer him; I have combated long—but this hour shews me that all is in vain. St. Orme has driven me to the utmost extremity; to this confession, which my pride, my womanly shame, my love to you Thorsten, made me shun more than death. And now that all is said, and that this burthen is cast off from my heart—now I wonder that I should feel it to be so horrible; for Lennartson, you cannot regard a youthful indiscretion so great—you cannot for some foolish letters condemn me, deprive me of your love!"

"Have you told me all, Flora, *all?*"

"I have told you *all.*"

'Farewell, Flora!" He offered her his hand, which she held fast, and exclaimed with anxiety—

"Where? in mercy—in pity for me, tell me where you are going? What you will do?"

"By one means or another to get these letters out of St. Orme's hands, and place them again in yours."

"Thorsten, you are my redeeming angel!" replied Flora as she threw herself on her knees before him. Lennartson was gone already.

Selma came home—alone. Her mother spent the evening with Mrs. Rittersvärd. Selma was in part made acquainted with that which had occurred, and heard it with astonishment and disquiet; yet most of all she seemed surprised that Flora had not earlier opened her heart, and disclosed all that it contained to Lennartson. When she heard Lennartson's last words she was confounded, and exclaimed—

"By one means or another, Flora? And you have let him take this resolve! You hazard his life!"

"Merciful heaven! is that possible?" cried Flora, "I never thought of that. But no! St. Orme would not venture—"

"St. Orme will venture every thing to obtain you. Lennartson to release you. St. Orme is known for a fortunate duelist; Lennartson shuns no danger, and I know that he regards duels in certain cases—Flora, Flora, what have you done?"

"And what would you that I should have done? Would you have had me sacrifice myself?" asked Flora gloomily.

Selma wrung her hands in despair.

"Fortunately," continued Flora, "St. Orme is not in Stockholm, and—"

"Envoyé St. Orme is without, and desires to speak with Miss Flora," announced the Philosopher now with an unearthly voice.

Flora turned pale. I fancy that we all turned pale.

"Go, Flora, go!" besought Selma almost commandingly—"go and speak with him. Prevent their meeting—save, save Lennartson!"

Flora looked at Selma with a dark expression, and turning to me said—

"Wilt thou go with me, Sophia? I will not again be alone with this man, but I will speak with him yet once more—I will attempt the utmost!"

I followed Flora. St. Orme stood in the large ante-room. He looked calm and self-possessed; went up to Flora, and wished to take her hand. She avoided this proudly, and cast upon him an annihilating glance.

He observed her coldly, and then said, "I see how it stands, and you also will soon see. Well then, what do you say? But—could we not speak without witness?"

"No! because I will not be again alone with a man like you."

"Aha! that sounds severe. Well then! You must complain of yourself, if any thing comes out which you would rather have had concealed."

"You are a mean slanderer, Adrian St. Orme!"

"Flora Delphin, let us avoid injurious words—at least, till there be further occasion; now they serve no purpose. Let us now talk candidly and reasonably. Let us look at the affairs as they are in their nakedness and truth; for what is the use of kicking against necessity? You have no better friend than I, Flora, and I can prove that thus I have been true to you spite of your whims. I have always behaved openly and honourably to you, even in telling you that you *must* be *mine;* that I would defy heaven and hell to prevent your becoming perjured. My love and my mode of thinking are of another kind to those of ordinary men; they take higher paths, and have higher aims. My will bows not either to weather or wind; what I will that will I, and—"

"Spare your words, St. Orme," interrupted Flora, impatiently. "I know you now, and I will no more be befooled with fine speeches. Tell me in short what you wish, and I will tell you what I have determined."

"What I wish, that you know—my love and my wishes you know. Let me now rather say what you wish."

"What do I wish?"

"Yes, what you wish at the bottom. What you must wish. Or, think you, that I do not know you? Do you think that I have allowed myself to be bewildered with these convulsions in your feelings, by this spectre of a new love which has seized upon your imagination? Child! Child! No one has reposed upon my

breast whose innermost soul I have not penetrated, whose slightest pulsation I have not heard. And to yours have I listened with the ears of sympathy and love—Flora you are deeply, deeply bound to me; not by your letters, your oaths, your love, which you have given to me—but by a mightier bond—by the depth of sympathy, by virtues, nay, even by failings; for even your failings are mine, and I know myself again in you. Fools command people to reform their errors. I have loved yours and adopted them, in order through them to make you happy. Look around you whether you can find such a love! And from this you will turn yourself, mistaking yourself and me! Do you think that your beauty, your talents, fettered me to you? hundreds possess these in a higher degree than you! No! it is your deeper self; your sublime, eccentric being, wandering and wavering, between heaven and hell! Upon the journey between these poles will I accompany you, you shall accompany me—sharing its perdition or its bliss! At this moment I offer you bliss! Confess yourself; you are no Northern maiden, Flora, and cannot be measured by the temperate life of the north. You are of a southern nature, and require for your bloom a warmer sun. Accompany me therefore to the East, to the magnificent Constantinople, and there—learn to know me rightly. For you know me not yet, Flora. It is a peculiarity of my nature not to open its depths except to a full devotedness—my love burns where it cannot bless, and you, yourself Flora, shall dread me from that moment in which you turn yourself from me. I have used sharp weapons against you, I will use them until the moment in which you—resign yourself captive! But then, too, will you become acquainted with a love stronger than the glow of the East, more beautiful than your own beautiful and burning fancy—trust me! You will recognise yourself again in the hour when you fully return to me—your first, your strongest love; you will find first the fulness of life in my arms. I know you better than you know yourself. For your own sake I conjure you to turn yourself fully to me, throw yourself into these arms which are opened for you, come to this breast and find a heaven—no! *that* is flat—a hell of bliss!"

And St. Orme fell upon his knees before Flora, and extended his arms to her.

She had during these words let her head sink upon her breast. When he had ended, she raised it, and standing up slowly, said with an agitated voice—

"What words! what expressions! I know them again—they wake strings which I thought were broken—but they resound still. Oh! that I could but believe you, and—But in vain! In this hour, when I am bewitched by your words, I feel, I know that you will only deceive me, that you do not love me, that you merely play a part. O St. Orme, how great would you be! how glorious would you be! if you were but *honest!* But you fail of this least and this greatest, and with it of all!"

St. Orme sprang up as if struck by an arrow, and a great change passed over him. The solately-extended arms were folded upon his breast, the colour paled upon his cheek, and with an icy scorn he stepped before Flora and said—

"You can then in this case so much better extend your hand to me, for you cannot indeed, my little Flora, gravely insist upon it that you are what the people call 'an honourable woman!'"

Flora felt this sting as keenly as St. Orme felt that which she gave. Flaming with anger, she exclaimed—

"Yes, too honourable, too good am I in truth to belong to you, mean man! And let happen what may, I never will become your wife!"

"You shall be my wife or nobody's; and you shall go to the grave with a stained reputation. If you will have me for an enemy, I will treat you accordingly."

"Do it! I fear you not, miserable, coward-heart! Thorsten Lennartson will speedily free me from your aspersions. I have seen you grow pale and tremble before him. You shall have experience of a strength which shall tame yours."

At this remembrance, St. Orme's pale cheeks coloured, and he said with a vengeful smile—

"Thorsten Lennartson will desert you when I let him see certain letters, in particular *one* certain letter—my poor little Flora, you seem to have a short memory, and not at all to remember that letter in which you invited me—"

Flora now interrupted him with a torrent of words and expressions, with which I will not stain my paper. Their principal meaning was, that St. Orme made use of her good faith, of her indiscretion, to blacken her intentions and her conduct; but it was not an innocent woman but a fury who spoke in Flora.

St. Orme heard her with coldness, and when she ceased speaking from exhaustion he said—

"When you have composed yourself, you will see that all this serves you not at all. You have in any case only one course to take, and that is, to go with me to Constantinople as my wife. You have made the way difficult for yourself, but it still stands open to you. Shall I shew it to you?"

Flora made no reply, and St. Orme continued—

"You write to-day to Lennartson and tell him, that on account of a prior engagement—which you had for a moment forgotten—you must renounce the honour of becoming his wife. You know best how you can turn it. And after that, confer your hand on your first, true love, and—he will conduct you as his dearly beloved wife to his beautiful villa near Constantinople."

"Know, St. Orme," interrupted Flora, "know, that if this took place—and something within me at this moment says that it will take place—then you lead misfortune into your house, your own Nemesis!" With this she stood up, pale, and with outstretched hand and with a fearful expression, she continued—"for I shall hate you, Adrian—I shall so hate you, that you yourself shall be terrified, and shall fear before—your own wife! Yes, laugh now! The time will come when you will not laugh, the time will come when I shall see you—take care of yourself St. Orme, you have awoke in me a horrible thirst. You have given me a desire to be near you, to be your wife, merely to punish you, merely to be revenged on you. There—but, take off yourself! there, take my hand, take it if you dare, take it, and—with it my eternal hate!"

"I take it and your hatred! It has amused me sometimes to compel indifference—now it gives me pleasure to force hate to change into love. In this respect I follow merely the doctrine of Christianity. Agreed, lovely bride! On Sunday they shall publish the banns for us three times in the church, and eight days afterwards, we will celebrate the marriage. But I am charmed with you for the beautiful struggle and the quick resolution. That well deserves a bridegroom's kiss."

With this, he clasped her in his arms, and they kissed; thus embrace each other the spirits of hell.

With a shudder, with a horrible 'hu!' Flora recovered her consciousness. St. Orme had vanished.

In the same moment Selma stood in the doorway and beckoned me silently to her. I went to her, and she whispered quietly—

"Brenner is here! He wishes to meet St. Orme, whom he understood to be here. In my anxiety I have told him somewhat of that which has occurred, and have mentioned to him the meeting which I feared between Lennartson and St. Orme. He seems to think that he has the first right to fight with St. Orme. I have had a deal of trouble to keep him back till the conversation here was ended, and he can hear its result from you. Come now and speak to him; tell us how it is!"

And she led me to Brenner, who was in my step-mother's boudoir. I found him in the most violent temper, and so determined to fight with St. Orme; that it was only with difficulty that I could prevent his doing so, and by telling him what turn the affair had taken, as well as by confessing my uncertainty whether Flora deserved that such men as Brenner and Lennartson should venture life and blood for her. I besought him earnestly at least to keep himself quiet this one day, and await further intelligence. I promised to write to him early in the morning on this subject. With this promise Brenner left us, and I accompanied Selma to Flora.

She paced rapidly up and down the room, talked loud, and seemed not to regard us.

"That is glorious, that is right glorious!" exclaimed she; "all is now settled; all choice, all torment over. He has won the game! But do not rejoice, then! Thou hast closed *one* future to me, but thou hast opened to me another. I will—I have a new goal, a new interest in life; and that is, to rack thee, to torment, to punish thee!"

"Flora!" exclaimed Selma, with an indescribable expression of pain and tenderness.

"Yes," continued she, "he shall learn whom he has subjected! Ah, Adrian St. Orme! We shall see! we shall see! Long have I wavered between heaven and the abyss—the abyss has won. Well! I will go to school there; I will be skilful in its arts, and more skilful than he. In such things a woman is always more skilful than a man."

"Flora! Flora!" cried Selma again.

"Who calls Flora?" exclaimed she, wildly. "Is it my good angel? then he may know that he calls on me too late. I will listen to him no more. I have now something else to do, and people may curse me or weep over me; it is all the same, and I shall not ask about it. All my feelings and all my thoughts are hatred and revenge. Ah, that I could properly revenge myself!"

She stood still a while, as if she bethought herself, clapped her hands, and exclaimed—

"I have it—I have it! He thinks of obtaining wealth with me, but he shall be mistaken. Married to him, I will become a spendthrift, a gambler; I will in every possible way lavish away money — will accumulate debts — will weave around him a web of trouble and vexation! — Ha! shudder, St. Orme! How thou shalt be imposed upon! To have employed so much labour, so much craft, so much eloquence, to have brought into thy house poverty and hatred! Gold and hatred, those thou mightst have embraced; but poverty and hatred, when they shall embrace thee! then perhaps we may see this iron brow grow pale, this bold glance become timid—then shalt thou wish to escape, but shalt not be able."

In this manner and in this spirit continued Flora for a long time. Selma had vanished in the mean time. It had become dark; a wild storm raged without, and showers of hail and rain poured clatteringly down. The uproar in nature seemed to allay the uproar in Flora's soul. She became calmer. She stood long in the window, observing the contest without. In a while her tears began to flow. She wept long, and appeared to obtain ease from so doing.

When she had somewhat composed herself, she seated herself at her writing-desk, saying—

"Now I will write to Lennartson, and beseech of him to abstain from all thoughts of me. I shall tell him that I am unworthy of his devotion, his esteem. That is not true; but what matters it? In this way I shall preserve him from all danger, and—I am now quite indifferent towards myself."

Deeply affected by these words, I exclaimed, "Wait yet a while, Flora. Let us think; let us consider; some outlet, some help must yet present itself."

"No, there is none;" sighed Flora, with a kind of quiet desperation, "and I am tired of labouring, of struggling against an irresistible destiny. This St. Orme is my dark destiny; I must be his, that I feel. O thou Lennartson! so strong and yet so good—he alone could have saved me. Yes, if he could have loved me as I loved him, beyond everything. But he could not thus love me. And yet I am not altogether unworthy of his love. I have a something in me, which under his protection, by his side, might have developed itself to great beauty. O Lennartson! had I been thine, how different had I, had everything been. That which thou hast loved should I have loved; and talents, wealth, all the gifts which I possess, and which now will be changed into a curse, would in thy hands have been changed into a blessing. Oh, to stand near such a gaol, and see it vanish; to hold in one's hand life's best lot, and to see it snatched away! To be compelled to renounce a Lennartson, in order to be the outcast and despairing prey of a St. Orme! Oh, why do I not die!"

And in a new outbreak of the most violent pain Flora threw herself down upon the floor.

At this moment a bright ray of light broke

ough the clouds into the room, and it seemed to me as if a white dove descended in this brightness, and spread its wings over Flora.

It was Selma, who with the lightness of a bird flew into the room, sank on her knees beside Flora, and whilst she threw off a white shawl which covered her head and shoulders, stretched forth her hands and exclaimed—

"No, live; live, my Flora! Live, and be happy. There are your letters!"

In her hand was a small bag of crimson silk.

With an exclamation of joy, "My letters! my letters!" Flora threw herself upon them.

"You are free, Flora!" continued Selma, with a voice which seemed to repress the agitation of her mind. "St. Orme resigns you——sets off soon from Stockholm——you are free—be happy, be happy!"

"Selma, what do you say?" exclaimed Flora; "are you, or am I insane? How—what—how have you known?"

With incoherent, zealous questionings both Flora and I surrounded Selma. But she answered nothing; she heard us not. She lay without consciousness on the floor, her hair and her dress wet through with rain.

We carried her to her bed, but our efforts to recal her to consciousness were fruitless. I sent with all speed a messenger to my stepmother, and another also to our family physician, Doctor L. And quickly were both of them beside her bed; my stepmother with a countenance as pale, almost as death-like, as that of her beloved daughter.

After a vein had been opened, Selma returned to life, but not to consciousness. She was in a sorrowful manner out of herself.

The clear friendly eyes were wild and staring, and seemed as if they would avoid some horrible sight.

She drew me towards her, and said half whispering,

"Do you know, it was horrible! I met him just as I came out of——out of the pit; and he looked at me with such terrible, flaming eyes—"

"Who looked at you so, my sweet Selma?" asked I.

"He——St Michael——you know. I wished to fly; but he held me back, and marked my forehead with his finger, because I had been with the bad one; and since then it burns within, and I know that I never more can shew myself among people. They all looked at me with such terrific looks——you also——I must look very horrible!"

"You are ill, Selma, and therefore everybody looks so anxiously at you; but you yourself look like a good angel, as you are."

"Yes. you say so; but he indeed knew better; he who saw me there——he would have killed me, would have run his spear into my heart, if I had not fled. Yes, I fled from him; but I felt that it was all over with me; that I was branded, and the whole world fled before me as I fled—"

"You must not talk so much now, Selma, you must try to sleep."

"Sleep!—No, I shall never sleep more. It burns so sadly here!" she laid her hand upon her forehead. "And I see everywhere the looks ——the looks! They will keep me awake till doomsday. No, I can never more sleep!"

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Whilst I listened to these horrible fantasies, and sought in vain after their cause, Doctor L. explained them to my stepmother by the words 'a *brain-fever*, a *mild* brain-fever." He said that this disease was very prevalent just now, and mostly made violent attacks without any ostensible cause. We immediately adopted all the remedies which he prescribed, and which are useful in the treatment of such diseases, Selma's head was raised high in bed, and the room was made dark and kept still, and cold applications were used for the burniug head. As I was engaged with attending to all this, they came and called me out. In the ante-room I found Lennartson, but so pale, and so agitated, as I had never before seen him.

"Where, where is Selma?" asked he hastily. "What had she to do with St. Orme? Who sent her there?"

"You do not suspect Selma of anything bad or incorrect?" asked I.

"Her! Impossible! But I suspect others. I fear that they misuse her self-sacrificing, affectionate heart."

"How and where did you meet with Selma?"

"I went to seek for St. Orme. A lady wrapped in a white shawl came at that moment out of his room. Some unmannerly young fellows tried to unveil her; I released her from them, and then I saw that she trembled; took her hand, to lead her down, and then I recognized her as—Miss Selma! She tore herself from me, and fled so hastily that I could not say a word to her—could not then accompany her—but now I must know why she was there?"

In as few words as possible, I related to the Baron all that had occurred.

We now saw that Selma, impelled by a sudden impulse to save Flora, and to prevent a meeting between St. Orme and Lennartson, had hastened to the dwelling of the first, defended alone by her enthusiasm and her devoted love. But by what talisman she has been able to induce St. Orme to give up the treasure which he has so long kept with the jealous grasp of the dragon, that is incomprehensible to us.

Deeply struck was Lennartson when he was made acquainted with Selma's present condition. As it was now very late in the evening he was obliged to go. "I shall come again early in the morning," said he. He inquired also after Flora, but seemed scarcely to hear my answer. Oh! it is ever clearer to me which he loves.

The 20th, in the Morning.

Now is the night over, but what a night! Selma has constant delirium. The same fantasies return, although under various forms; and well did I now understand their ground. O my poor, young sister! Towards morning she desired to have myrtle and flowers, and began to weave a garland, which she called Flora's bridal wreath; for some time she kept up zealously, but at times her feeble hands dropped down, and would not complete the work. She sang also scraps of her joyous songs, but she ended none. My poor stepmother went about with speechless anxiety in her eyes, and seemed to ask with them, 'How is it! How will it be?' Flora is gone this morning to her sister, after having sate up with me through the night. I have now written to Brenner, and

shall not again leave my Selma's chamber, where I write this.

In the Evening.

All remains the same. Selma continues to weave her garland, but laments that it never will be ready; in the intervals she sings. Doctor L. looks troubled, and talks of cutting off her hair—her beautiful hair!

Lennartson has been here several times to inquire after her. They laid in the night straw before the house, to deaden the sound of the wheels. That was Lennartson's attention.

Brenner also has been here, but I did not see him.

The 21*st.*

Another night of inexpressible disquiet and anguish! Doctor L. does not think that she can live through the day, if a happy crisis do not take place.

In Sweden, they call certain nights at Midsummer *iron nights*, in which a frost spirit appears and breathes over the flower-strewn earth. Often then is killed and destroyed in a few hours the hopes of years. Then is the heaven clear, the air calm; and when the sun ascends, the corn-fields shine with the finest silver attire—but it is the *attire of death;* an icy garment, under whose covering the blooming ears are destroyed.

In human life too occur at times these *iron* nights. Then die the young, the gay, the blooming; happy souls, if they die not only in heart, if they escape being left alone on the earth like the empty ears of the field, without sap and without the power of life. Selma! thou young, thou good one! I can scarcely wish that thou shouldst live—for ever plainer hear I out of thy wanderings, the secret of thy heart, thy silent sufferings. But if thou goest home, how desolate—

Later.

Some change seems to be taking place in Selma; she raves still, but her fantasies assume a more quiet character. She believes now that she shall die, and has called to me several times only to say "when I am dead, remain in my place with my mother! Love her! She is so good!"

Flora was here only for a moment; she cannot bear to see and hear Selma; and is for the most part with her sister.

In the Evening.

O now one hour of hope! May it not deceive us!

In the afternoon, Selma called to me and said—

"Now I am dead, Sophia! You see plainly that I lie in my grave; and it is good to be there too, if I only find rest, if I only can sleep. Used they to sleep in graves? To sleep and forget—till they awoke with God? I wonder why I cannot sleep like the rest!—ah yes, I know, I know, it is *his* glance! Have you seen him?"

"Seen whom, my sweet Selma?"

"St. Michael! It is his flaming glance, which burnt me, which keeps me awake in the grave. But I know likewise, that when I can once see him in the light, above the clouds, then will he regard me quite otherwise. I know that all here which is bad, happens only because it is so dark on earth; that one cannot see all as it is in its truth."

A sudden thought with this occurred to [illegible]. Ah and whilst I endeavoured to chime in with her ideas, I said that I had seen him of whom she spoke; he had no suspicion of her, but would gladly look in light and love upon her.

"If I could believe that," said Selma, with a look of melancholy joy, "then I should be easier. If he will let a look of blessing fall upon my grave, then it would press through the earth, and down into my coffin, and the torments would then cease, and I should be able to slumber in peace. But tell nobody in the world," continued she vehemently, "tell nobody that I have loved him. Say to everybody, 'she has loved no one, excepting her father, her mother, her friend Flora, and her sister Sophia.' And do not tell Flora that Selma died for her!—Tell her that I was stung by a snake, and of that I became ill, mortally ill."

Whilst Selma talked thus with loud ringing voice, and fever burning upon her cheeks, a light movement took place in the chamber; and as I looked in its direction, I perceived Lennartson and Flora standing behind Selma's bed's-head. They seemed to have heard all; he held his hands pressed against his breast, and seemed to breathe with difficulty. According to the prescription of the physician, Selma was raised high in the bed, in a half-sitting posture; her beautiful hair fell down in waves; over her head she had thrown the half-finished garland, which she had bound for Flora; it was the beloved prey which the dark ravager approached to embrace; it was the sylph, who had lost her wings, but now stiffening in death, could not lose her beauty.

Dark fancies seemed again to ascend in her.

"No, no!" exclaimed she, with supplicating outstretched hands, "thrust me not down into this dark depth! I desire nothing base! Help, Lennartson!"

And in the same moment Lennartson stood before her, clasped her extended hands between his, and said with an indescribable expression of love—

"What fears Selma? Lennartson is here. In life and in death will he defend thee! Look at me, Selma, and trust in me!"

She looked at him at first with a timid, astonished glance; but this soon changed itself through the powers which proceeded from Lennartson's glorious beaming eyes. He seated himself on the edge of her bed, and continued to look at her quietly and stedfastly; and, wonderful! during this gaze, the excitement passed away from hers, and the loving and clear expression returned. She spoke no word, but it was as if her being's hitherto unexpressed, fettered harmony now poured itself forth in silent streams, and united them and made them happy. Over the countenance of the poor invalid, the expression of unspeakable peace diffused itself more and more, the weary eyelids sank, and she softly slept. Long sate Lennartson still, with his gaze fixed upon the slumberous countenance; but my stepmother's mute signs compelled him at length to remove himself. Silently extended she her arms to him; he clasped her in his, leaned himself upon her shoulder, and deep sighs laboured forth from his breast.

Flora had vanished, but none of us had observed when she went.

All is still; so still in the house; they know that the beloved daughter of the house sleeps an important sleep. The philosopher looks gloomy in the highest degree. He said to me yesterday in his unearthly voice, "If Miss Selma dies, then it is not worth while to live." Then is the sunshine gone from the world.

The 22nd.

The house will not lose its joyful sunshine. The crisis is ours, and Selma is out of danger! We thank God; we congratulate one another; and yet, and yet, we cannot entirely rejoice. Life, which again opens itself for Selma, does not appear joyous. Lately, whilst Selma yet slept, I found my stepmother with an open letter in her hand, and with an expression of deep dejection in her countenance. It seemed to me that she had suddenly become several years older.

"She sleeps on yet!" said I with animation, "I think that she breathes easier and freer."

"May that be as God pleases!" replied my stepmother quietly, and almost spiritless, "I dare scarcely wish to keep her. There is so much which hereafter may make life dark to her—that I see now. Flora will marry the man whom of all others is most suitable for my Selma, and the only one whom she has loved, whom I have seriously wished to call my son. St. Orme is gone, and has sent me a letter, which confirms all that I have dreaded for some time. He has the whole winter long borrowed from me, now large sums of money, and now small, which he always promised to repay, and never has repaid, and which I have been good-natured enough, or rather weak enough, to lend upon his bare word, without any written obligation. And now he is gone, and writes merely short and negligently, that 'he will on the first possibility repay me,' and so on. But I know what that means; he will never repay me, and I, who lent to him far beyond my means, and therefore have been myself obliged to borrow from others, am drawn into infinite trouble! I have not deserved it from St. Orme! But this would not make me so uneasy if it only concerned myself. But it is bitter to me that my good lovely girl will be obliged to live in want and self-denial. No! in that case she had better go to our Lord, if such be his will;—to be sure then I should be very solitary, very forlorn in my old days." Large tears rolled down the pale cheeks of my stepmother, and she wiped them quietly away with the corner of her silk shawl. This rent my very heart, and at the feet of my stepmother I conjured her to consider all that which I possessed as her own, and to let me have a daughter's right in her heart; I would, if Selma died, never leave her.

She thanked, she embraced me, but seemed to find little consolation in that which I offered her. Selma's reawaking to life made all trouble for a moment to retreat, and joy alone bear sway, but the bird of night soon shewed itself again. The philosopher looks happy, and casts such bright glances at me that I cannot help answering them kindly.

The 24th.

The Viking also, the honest, warm-hearted Wilhelm Brenner also, is deceived and almost ruined by St. Orme.

And his children! My heart bleeds for him, and feels it hard that he no longer comes here. Lennartson has been here every day, happy in the happy change in Selma's illness, but he has not desired to see her. He is now deeply troubled about Brenner's misfortunes, which he however bears with manyly fortitude. Lennartson has in a brotherly manner offered him his assistance. But Brenner has refused it; he is certain that in a few years time he shall be able to help himself. "But this I say to thee brother," continued he, with melancholy cheerfulness, to Lennartson, "that if our Lord calls me to his army above, before I here have gained firm footing and position on earth for me and mine, I then shall leave thee a legacy."

"O! what?" asked he.

"My children!"

A silent shake of the hands followed; thus understand each other noble minds.

But these words have made me weep. For to me the Viking gives nothing in his will. He does not love me sufficiently for that.

In the middle of May he sails to the Mediterranean.

The 26th.

Deeply affected by the state and the depressed appearance of my stepmother, I asked her today why she did not confide her affairs to her half-brother. He would certainly be able as well to counsel as to assist her. But with a kind of horror she repelled this. "No! no!" exclaimed she, "it is not worth! It would serve no purpose." I was astonished; I thought that it would have helped greatly; never could the Chamberlain find a better opportunity than now, of gratifying his so often-talked-about passion for doing good in silence. "Yes, I know what he would say," said my stepmother, sighing; still very much troubled about a considerable sum which she should have to pay in a few days, she resolved at length in the evening to send to her brother. He came, and seemed considerably embarrassed about that which was confided to him. At last he counselled his sister to give up her establishment, and make herself a *bankrupt!* This would be the best mode of saving herself. With an indignation, and a high-mindedness, which won for her my entire love, my stepmother rejected this proposal; "rather would she live on bread and water, and try the uttermost, than that anybody should suffer by her." The Chamberlain declared that "this mode of thinking was very beautiful, very respectable; but besought her to make use of her reason, and so on." My stepmother would hear nothing of that; her brother had no other advice to give, and cast a glance at me, after which he hastily went jesting about my 'Jupiter-mien,' and pretending some important business. My warm heartfelt approbation of my stepmother's mode of thinking and acting seemed to console and cheer her.

The 29th.

A lovely, warm day, which Selma's convalescence made the more beautiful to us. The quiet seriousness which now pervades her being, prevents her not from receiving with thankful joy every little gift which life and friendship offer to her. My stepmother endeavours to conceal from her her secret disquiet and her trouble, but is often near betraying them. At my request she has now confided them to Len-

nartson, who seems to be selected to be everybody's helper.

How it now stands between Lennartson and Flora I cannot rightly understand. Yesterday I found them together in the ante-room, he with his arm around her waist, she with her hand leaning on his shoulder;—before them, upon the table, lay the crimson little bag, the object of so much torment and confusion. Serious and tender words seem to have been spoken by Lennartson; Flora was deeply excited; but it seemed to me that neither of them were happy. Flora had been here and with Selma, but only for a short time, and continues to be a riddle to me. She has just now written me a few words, the meaning of which is, that since she was easy with regard to Selma's health, she would accompany her sister on a pleasure journey to Svartsjö, to hear the nightingales sing; but that on the 3rd of May she should again be here.

Flora journeys and amuses herself, and leaves the friend who has sacrificed all for her to her silent pain. Her brother also, at this moment, might have some claim upon her care and companionship; his health is very uncertain, and he has been ordered in the spring to travel abroad, and to make use of one of the warm baths of Germany. But amid all the troubles which her connexions suffer, Flora thinks only about amusing herself and listening to the songs of the nightingales. What deep egotism! But I will not condemn her yet. Perhaps she goes to the quiet parks of Svartsjö to listen there in peace to the inner voice.

The 30th.

To-day Selma was so well, that I could desire from her some account of her meeting with St. Orme, and by what magic art she obtained from him in a moment, the weapons which he had so long held, and nullified the victory which he had just won. The little which Selma told me on this subject, and which I could not wish to pursue farther, from the dread that she might thereby be too much excited, has enabled me, on consideration of every circumstance, to form into the following picture:

At the moment when Flora seemed sunk in a bottomless pit without redemption, Selma felt herself animated by a courage and a wish to save her, which were powerful enough to defy every thing. The fear of coming too late to prevent the meeting between Lennartson and St. Orme, the feeling of a danger which pressed on many sides, made her almost unconsciously follow upon his steps. She scarcely herself knew what she was about when she found herself at St. Orme's door; and the singular reception which she found by him can only be explained by an extraordinary state of mind in himself.

St. Orme had left the bride whom he had fettered with power and craft, had left her with apparent coldness and exultation of victory. But no man remains cold before the frenzy of a woman who has once had a place in his heart. Nor was St. Orme calm when he left Flora. The tempest of that hour shook its wings, foreboding misfortune over him, and through the power of contrast awoke, perhaps, at this moment the remembrance of a very different kind. It was exactly this very day when St. Orme, so many years ago, led to the altar the lovely and noble Virginia Adelan, his only noble, his only pure love.

And now they stood there beside each other—the two different points of time—the two dissimilar brides. In fancy came to him Virginia's bashful kiss on this day; he felt now that which, like the flame of hatred, lay burning from Flora's lips; and his mind turned itself from her, and was irresistibly drawn to the lovely young wife that once was his. He thought on her beautiful love, how this still was his in her hour of death; perhaps returned to his fancy, also, how he then, in mysticising sorrow, had besought her forgiveness, and had prayed her to reveal herself to him after death, and how she had promised it. Perhaps St. Orme wished to remove these thoughts, and to call up others from the Opera-foyérs and Parisian boudoirs—but between these glittering, dazzling scenes, rose up again and again the image of his pale young wife, as he had seen her in her white robe of death—and a horrible feeling, like a wind from death, from the grave, crept through St. Orme's breast.

He sat silently in his room, depressed and full of thought, looking darkly forth into the gathering twilight, when the door slowly opened, and a female figure, clothed in white from head to foot, presented itself before him.

St. Orme started up, but staggered and sunk backward on the sofa, hoarsely stammering forth—

"Virginia!"

"Virginia speaks to thee through me," replied the sweet voice of Selma. "St. Orme, hear us!" And now words flowed from her lips, which she herself cannot remember, and with which a higher power seemed to inspire her. The excitement of the moment had opened St. Orme's heart; the recollection of Virginia, the prayer in her name, the interest which he always had towards Selma, the singularity of her act, the deep earnestness which lay in her representations, the speaking of life and death from such young, lovely lips—all this made his mind waver, and made him listen to Selma's prayer for the liberation of Flora. Selma saw him waver, but thought also that she saw the moment when he would cease to do so, when he would harden himself against her prayers—and suddenly she dropped the tone of beseeching, to show to him in an almost threatening tone, the certain consequences to himself if he persisted in his proposal; she told him Flora's words, and determination for the future; she showed to him Lennartson, Brenner, and even Felix, who were ready, with arms in their hands, to assert Flora's freedom; she showed to him danger, death, and ruin in every way, like the furies who would stand in his path, and St. Orme—shuddered.

It is the established rule in modern romance literature, to represent bad people or *villains* in an especial manner as strong and powerful men. But in real life we see it otherwise. Then we see that it is, above all, the upright, the noble man who is strong and mighty—who with his will and his faith stands firm to death. The base, the mean mind may for a time appear strong and insolent; but in the hour of certain danger, a sudden outbreak of irresolution or

cowardice proves that he bears a terrified heart in his breast, that he knows he stands upon trembling ground.

What passed at this moment in St. Orme's breast I cannot say, nor yet decide which part of Selma's words exercised the greatest power over him; but certain is it, that he now felt the necessity of submitting to her demands; and looking gloomily before him, and murmuring the words of the unfortunate Philip Egalité upon the guillotine, "One hell is as good as another!" went to his writing-desk, and took thence the crimson bag containing Flora's letters. He gave them to Selma, with these words—

"You are the sister of my Virginia, Selma; and for your sake I will voluntarily abstain from that from which no other power should make me abstain. Tell Flora that she is free—my presence here shall not long oppress her; I shall set off the day after to-morrow. You can go now; you have obtained your object, and may be glad."

Selma wished to thank him; but he interrupted her with severity, almost with rudeness, and prayed her to spare him her sentimental talk, and to go her way.

Selma moved away afraid, but still at the door she turned herself, with these words—

"O St. Orme! though you do say so, yet I will bless you!" She heard St. Orme whistling, and hastened down the stairs; here she met—what I have already indicated, and which was too much for so fine feeling and pure a nature to bear.

After Selma had told me what I wished to know, she besought me with deeply crimsoning blushes to tell her Lennartson's behaviour to her during her illness, of which she had only a dark comprehension. I told her all; and an unspeakably inward gladness shone hereupon in her eyes, and expressed itself in grateful tears. She felt herself beloved by *him*—she knew that she stood bright and pure before his glance. That was bliss enough for her.

The 1st of May, forenoon.

The Lady-Councillors of Commerce! And so stuffed out with gossip, that it stood up to the throat and out at the mouth. The report of Flora's marriage, not with St. Orme, but with Lennartson, was the chief subject; the great ball which was to be given the day after to-morrow at the castle, was the next; the walks in the parks in the afternoons and the beautiful new equipages, which were then to be seen, was the third; and the fourth was Brenner's loss of all his accumulated property, together with his voyage to the Mediterranean, and his long absence. They knew precisely how it would go on with his domestic affairs during his absence, and had many anxieties on the subject. The oldest boy ought to go to the orphan-school; and to look after and care for the other children, Brenner had taken into his house one Mrs. Trollman, 'a decent' person enough, but a right coffee-bibber, who made coffee day and night, and was the veriest gossip in the world. And with regard to housekeeping, one could very well imagine how that would go, when we know that during the late Trollman's life they had never baked at home, but had had all their bread from a bakehouse, and yet they had four children and two maid-servants in the house!!! One could think how it would be. It would be a foolish business. It really was incomprehensible how Colonel Brenner could take such a person into his house; but she had hung herself in fact upon him, by being, while the children were ill, so obliging as a neighbour, and so good to them.

"Have the children been ill?" exclaimed I.

"Yes; they have had the scarlet fever, poor little things; and the two youngest are even now very ill, especially the lame boy. Now, it would be well if our Lord took him."

"The poor father!" sighed I.

"Yes, poor fellow!" repeated Miss P., "and that he is now obliged to set off from his home in this misery. And then he looks too as if he had not been *once* but *twice* buried!"

"But tell me now, in confidence, my sweet young lady," whispered the married sister confidentially; when will the great the extraordinary betrothal here be declared?

I declared my perfect ignorance respecting it.

"The sooner that is done," continued she, "the better will it be for Flora, to silence all uneasy tongues, which assert that perhaps things do not at all hang together. There was at one time a strange report in circulation. And people seem so little satisfied—inquisitive people—and who thought that I ought to know a little of what went on here in the house where I am so intimate, and where I, as I said, loved every chair; yes, people actually reproach me because I am not better informed—but I have, unfortunately, so little curiosity in me! But as regards this affair, I must confess that I willingly would know a little more for Flora's and my good friend Mrs. Adelan's sake."

If the lady was unfortunately so little curious, I also was as little communicative; and to say the truth, that which I had heard of Brenner made me incapable of hearing or talking of other things.

I wonder whether Brenner will see me before his journey.

The 3rd of May.

To-day Selma, for the first time, was able to enjoy the animating air of spring, which breathed softly through the open window into the boudoir of my stepmother.

A lark soared jubilantly over the river up into the high blue air; white sails glided slowly hither from the Riddarfjärd, and the mountains and the shores clothed themselves in green. Selma saw all this and smiled, with tears in her beaming eyes. "How lovely this is!" said she, "how good and beautiful is life!"

She extended her hands to my stepmother and me, who sate on either side of her, and looking observantly upon us, she continued, softly smiling, "Why so grave? why so solemn, as if the conversation were about my funeral? Now I am well; now it is spring; now we shall be happy!"

My stepmother rose up hastily, and wished to go, that she might conceal her emotion; but Selma held her back by her dress, and exclaimed while she wound her arms round her. "No, mamma dear! do not go! Now we can speak openly; now I can hear all; now I must know what it is which makes those who are dear to me, look so anxious. And perhaps it

is nothing unexpected by me; perhaps I forebode already what it is. Tell me—tell me plainly at once, has St. Orme deceived us? Are our affairs in a bad condition; in one word—are we poor?"

"Yes, we are poor, my sweet child!" said my stepmother, now sobbing aloud; and bending over the head of her sitting daughter, whose hair and brow were wet with her tears—she could say no more.

"But we are not poor in love," returned Selma. "Then it is not so dangerous; I have my mother, and my mother has me, and we both have Sophia—we are still rich!"

"And we have also Lennartson," said I, and added some words on the manner in which he had behaved in the affair.

"It is so like him," said Selma, with deep, almost quiet emotion.

When we had become calmer, we talked in stillness and cheerfulness of our condition. Selma was one of those who makes all things easy, and proved to her mother, that by the sale of all her ornaments and her own beautiful collection of pictures all debts could be paid, and something remain also over. Selma had evidently a clearer idea of the condition of the family than her mother. "And," continued she with cheerful courage, "after we have made all things straight here in Stockholm, we will retire to some pretty country town, and settle down there and live economically. And I also will do something for food and clothing, and not merely, as hitherto, live like the lilies of the field. I will teach people desirous of learning, some of my many accomplishments, or translate books, or write books myself. Who knows what inspirations may come? And Sophia shall be my reviewer. O! we shall do great things!"

"Oh! if the sylph will only dance before us as hitherto," said I, "then I fear nothing in the world."

My stepmother wept no longer. Consoled and cheered, she embraced her daughters, and thanked God for them.

The Philosopher announced "Baron Lennartson."

Selma turned pale, and arose evidently trembling. I asked if she would go into her chamber and rest for a moment.

"No," replied she, "I feel myself strong enough to see him. Besides, my mother and my Sophia are with me.

Lennartson went up to Selma with an exclamation of joyful surprise as he saw her. She offered to him her hand, which he seized with animation, but both were so much excited, as to be unable to say anything for some time. Selma first broke silence, as she said with a tolerably firm voice—

"We have all of us so much, so infinitely much to thank you for. How good you are, to stand by us even in this trouble!"

We now came to Selma's help, and related to Lennartson that of which we had just been speaking. Lennartson seemed pleased to be able to speak openly with Selma of the condition of affairs, and shewed to her a statement which he had drawn up on paper; and by which it appeared, that the business was much better than they at first had supposed.

When Selma cheerfully spoke of selling her own pictures, Lennartson seemed affected, for he knew well how dear and precious they were to her, even for his sake who had collected and given them to her, her beloved father; but he confessed that by this sale the affairs of the family would be most safely and most speedily rectified, and said he knew a safe purchaser. (I am much deceived if this purchaser be not—the Baron himself. Methought I saw it in him.)

For the rest, he besought my stepmother and Selma to be calm, and to leave all in his hands, he would endeavour to arrange all for the best.

As he was about to leave, it seemed to him difficult. He held Selma's hand at parting long in his, and seemed to wish to say something, but his eyes only spoke a silent and expressive language; at length he pressed her hand reverentially to his lips, bowed himself deeply before her, and went.

And Selma! she stood there so quiet; so beautiful in her womanly nobility, happy in the midst of her misfortune, to feel her own worth and to see it acknowledged by such a man, and this raised her at this moment above all embarrassment, above all pain. Neither did she droop her eyes before his warm, eloquent glance, but met it in clearness and inwardness. She was not ashamed to let him look down into the depth of her soul, she knew that he was great enough to see the feelings that lived therein for him, without misunderstanding her, without moving out of his way. They stood there, full of heavenly confidence in each other.

But the scenes of this afternoon had, however, been too much for Selma's yet weak bodily strength. When Lennartson was gone, her outward fortitude was gone too, and she sank almost fainting into my arms. Perhaps she recognised, as I did, in Lennartson's silent adieu, something of a particular meaning; perhaps it is true, as reports have circulated, that he this evening at the Castle will make his appearance as Flora's betrothed, and receive the congratulations of royalty, and of the whole world. Selma asked me as she went to bed, if I knew anything of Flora.

I replied that I had heard that she had returned on that day, from her Svartsjö expedition, and would with her sister be present at the Castle. I could not help adding a few grave words of blame respecting Flora.

"Oh!" sighed Selma, "truly it is strange, and I do not understand her; but all will some day be clear, and Flora also. I have loved her so much!" and with this Selma began to weep bitterly.

I left my stepmother, who read aloud to Selma by the evening lamp, and went up to my room, longing to be left alone with my own thoughts. And now here sit I alone with them, and have written down the foregoing, amid the dull rattle of carriages which roll upwards from the North-bridge to the Castle. Now it is midnight, and all has become still in the streets. From the Castle windows, towards the Lion Hill, shine orange-coloured lights through the dusky May night; there lie the great state-rooms; and when I think on the different scenes *there* and *here*—when I think of Flora glittering in joy and beauty, saluted and honoured as the bride of Lennartson, whilst she forgets her near-

est connexions in their trouble, leaves her friend and her preserver to a life full of renunciation,—then my heart is embittered towards her, and I feel that the hatred at which we played for a time becomes more earnest. If she at this moment stood before me, she should hear words which would cover her brow with shame, which would make her shudder before herself, and—sooner or later, she shall hear them!

The 4th.

I was interrupted on the foregoing night by the stopping of a carriage before our door, and by a gentle movement which occurred in the house; immediately afterwards I heard soft footsteps upon the little stairs which led to Flora's and my chamber.

The bells now rang one o'clock at night. I went out into the corridor with a light in my hand to see what night wanderer it might be, and, in amazement, I saw standing there before me——Flora! Flora in her brilliant ball-dress, with a white garland of roses on her head; but for all that so pale, so changed, that she rather looked as if she had come out of a funeral vault than from a splendid festival.

"Can I speak with you?" said she, with a voice that I also thought changed; but put out the light I pray you! It destroys my eyes—I have lately seen too much light!"

I did as Flora desired, and conducted her into my room, where she threw herself into an arm chair. We both were silent. I remembered not a word of my condemnatory sermon.

"Is it not true, Sophia," began Flora at length, "that lately, and especially to-night, you hate me in good earnest."

"Yes, it is true!" I replied.

"I do not wonder at it, continued Flora, "but you have not had entire right to do so; and before long, perhaps, you will—hate me no longer. You have been more than once kind to me, Sophia, and therefore I desire now—after the manner of the world—that you should be still kinder towards me, and listen to me with patience. But I am not entirely and altogether selfish. I know how bad it is to cherish bitter feelings, and I will therefore endeavour to extinguish those with which I have inspired you, if it be possible before —— But I must not anticipate!

"You have found me to be a strange and incomprehensible being, and I shall give you the key thereto.

"You have sometimes talked to us of *primeval words*, and the primeval word of my unclear being is buried deep in my childhood and youthful home, in the influences which surrounded my cradle, which accompanied my soul to its twentieth year. My mother was a good-natured, but weak and vain woman, my father a stern and haughty man, who despised all women, perhaps because he had found none near him whom he could rightly esteem. Contention ruled in our home, in one thing only were the parents agreed; to educate their children only for show, only to glitter and make their fortune in the polite world. In my soul early contended vanity and love of power, with noble impulses, but these were soon compelled to give way before the first; the heart which was capable of throbbing for a noble love, was compelled to throb for trifling and unworthy desires, and all the talents which might have conduced to greater and better purposes were speedily made subservient to vanity. O lot and fate of woman! Already in childhood was my soul poisoned by praise, flattery, and gifts, when I had been successful in company, or had drawn on myself observation and admiration. This went on through the whole of my youth; and to make a great marriage, to obtain a brilliant position in life, was shown to me as the one object of my existence. I lived more and more for this purpose, and sought merely to feed my immeasurable vanity. My natural gifts favoured me, and for a long time I conquered wherever I wished it; but I superciliously refused the easy conquest; refused soon to gratify the projects of my parents, and lived merely for pleasure. It only flattered my self-love, that I in this way made a few honest men unhappy. I myself remained cold. Then I met with St. Orme. You know how his reputation, his talents, his person, enchanted me. For the first time I became acquainted with love, and his homage flattered my self-love. His principles completed the annihilation of the good which still was in me; he imposed upon me by a certain superiority in will and thought, and had, for a time, an extraordinary power over me. But that was of a demoniacal nature, and had no proper root in my heart, in any part of my better self. When I saw myself forsaken by him my pride and my worldly love helped me to forget him. New impressions assisted this. Selma, with whom I at this time came into a nearer connexion, had a living and beneficial influence upon me. I attached myself to her, so far as my selfish heart permitted it, and many better feelings were awakened in my breast by her warm friendship, by her beautiful and pure soul.

"My father died, and had named in his will Lennartson as my guardian, perhaps in the thought that he might soon become something more. It was a marriage in every way flattering to my vanity and my ambition, and there needed not the hints of my mother to make me attempt his conquest. I regarded this as easy; but deceived myself, and the better I knew Lennartson, I saw only in his soul, in his activity, in his efforts, that which was great, before which all that I had before loved or striven after appeared to me pitiful and dwarf-like. Add to this, he was so amiable, so agreeable, even when he blamed me, that my heart soon was drawn into the play, and he became the object of my life. I saw all too well that I had made an impression upon him; and although he maintained towards me his full independence, and seemed not to permit himself to be enchanted by me, still I did not doubt but that in the end I should succeed under some of the forms or hues which, like a cameleon, I had accustomed myself to assume, in order to please dissimilar natures and tempers. But the forms which I assumed were as if without a soul; and as the sunbeams dissipate the ignis-fatui of night, so did Lennartson's glance penetrate and nullify all these false shapes. This character became ever more powerful, ever more conquering, ever more crushing to my self-love, ever more dangerous for my soul's peace. And never did I feel his power, and my misery deeper, than in the mo-

ment when I knew that he saw through me and despised me. Despised by the man I loved, and felt that it was justice——unspeakable anguish!"

Flora sprang up suddenly, and threw up the window towards the river, threw back her curls, and seemed to inhale with delight the cool fresh night air. And the spectacle that was spread out before her sight was well calculated to calm, to elevate, an excited mind. Crystal-clear and still reposed the May-night over the city. The dark body of the Castle, with its lights glimmering from within, rested itself in quiet majesty amid the dark blue heaven; below, lay in its dark shadow, the island of the Holy Ghost (Helgeandsholm), with its strange, bloody remembrances, and silver-clear lay the water of the Mälar with its shore, and spread out in the distance its calm mirror, over which light mists reposed. The pennons on the vessels in the harbour hung quietly; all seemed to sleep, and the peace of night brought to mind the passing of the day's strife.

After a moment Flora continued, more calmly, "I remember it as well as if it had occurred to-day. Out of old habit, and also with the desire of awakening jealousy in Lennartson, I had coquetted with a man who had a fancy for me, but to whom I was quite indifferent; I misled him to follies, and laughed at him afterward in Lennartson's presence. On that Lennartson broke through the forbearance which he had hitherto shewed towards me, and talked sharply to me, unveiled me before myself, and shewed me in what a dangerous and desperate path I stood. Such serious words had never been spoken to me before, never had any one shewn to me so little forbearance. My first movement was one of pride and anger; I would cast the audacious one forever from me; my next was to write to him, to 'open to him my whole heart, and let him see the feelings which he had infused into me.' I was so accustomed to conquest, that I expected immediately to see Lennartson at my feet. He came, but—as a brother, mild but serious, and only by a certain embarrassment in his manner could I see that he well understood, but that he *would* not understand me. Ah! I was not the woman whom he could love, not the one whom he could choose for his life's companion!

"When I saw that, my pride arose and bade me to conquer my love, this again bade me to conquer my evil propensities and to become worthy of him. The kindness and the interest which he shewed to me, the pleasure which he had in my talents, fettered me all the more closely to him, and gave me the desire to change myself to that ideal of beautiful womanhood which at all times seemed to float before Lennartson's soul. But ah! when one is artificially educated, there is nothing more difficult than to form oneself to a true and simple being. The most ravelled skein is more easy to rectify than an entangled and corrupted soul. And *they* alone can understand me, who, while they are labouring to raise themselves and to attain a higher stand, feel themselves perpetually as it were cast backward by a base demon into the deep pit from which they would mount, who have experienced the torment of feeling themselves below themselves.

"At this time my mother fell into a suffering illness which only ended in her death. I watched her with tenderness, and that which all my arts and my talents could not accomplish was effected by this simple thing. When Lennartson saw me fulfil my filial duties he was drawn nearer to me; I regained his esteem, and his heart seemed to meet my feelings for him. By the death-bed of my mother he pressed the fatherless and motherless to his breast, and bade me lay my hand in his, and we exchanged holy vows.

"What now followed you know; Lennartson was called away to his father, and travelled with him into foreign lands; a will made me rich, and St. Orme came back and let me feel the snares in which I had entangled myself. I loved Lennartson now, and with him had new life awoke within me; but he was away when St. Orme returned, and he acquired somewhat of his former power, of his injurious influence over me. His bold will and power imposed upon me again, and he flattered and excited again my not yet rooted-out inclination for pleasure, and for the conquests of vanity. When Lennartson returned he regained his power, and St. Orme's star paled; but I was no longer free to tear myself from him; I was in his power, and my prayers and my threats were alike impotent. Then arose hatred and frenzy in my heart, and all the more as I was convinced that it was not *me* but my property which he loved. But you know all this, know my struggles, know how the victory was won at the moment in which all appeared to be lost, and I will not repeat it; but know you also Sophia to what degree the victory at this moment is mine?"

"What would you say?"

"I would say at this moment nothing prevents me from being Lennartson's wife. He has offered me his hand, overcoming in magnanimity that which should have divided us; he knows all, and forgives all for my love's sake. The cup of happiness is filled to the brim, and offered to me by the hand of fortune and of mercy; now for me remains merely one thing"

"And that is?"

"To put it back, to renounce it!"

"How?"

"Ah! at the moment when I heard Selma upon the bed of suffering, where she lay for my sake, utter in the delirium of fever the long-buried secret of her heart; as I saw Lennartson's feeling for her, saw their glances melt into one, then awoke in me the thought to offer myself, and to be the only unhappy one. But I was too little accustomed to indulge noble thoughts, and I struggled against them and tried to persuade myself that Lennartson still loved me at the bottom, and that I could soon regain the love which I had lost through my conduct. I wished to show myself noble, upright; I laid in Lennartson's hands the letters which have made me so unhappy, and prayed him to judge me. I was sure of this, that he would not accept them; I did not deceive myself; he pushed them away from him, but took my hands in his and let me swear, solemnly swear that there was nothing in these letters which prevented me from becoming the *wife of an honourabl man*. Such were his words, and I swore..

Thank God! I could do so. Thereupon he drew me to him, and spoke words of angelic goodness and nobility; but confessed that his heart was mine no longer, and acknowledged another love—I knew well to whom, although her name was not mentioned. He asked me whether I would have patience with him and assist his endeavours to overcome this inclination, in order that he might fulfil his engagement with me. He would therefore for a time go into voluntary exile till he again could feel himself free, and could offer me a heart more worthy of me than now, and in a condition to make me as happy as it was his wish and intention to do. We have both of us," concluded he, "erred in our paths, but the right way stands open to us still, let us take it. I will soon leave Sweden; but you shall write to me in my absence, and I will write to you, and thus we shall become dearer to each other, and become nearer to each other. We separate now only for a time in order that we may be more inwardly united. We will not, my Flora, unite ourselves in *untruth*, but in *truth;* therefore have I also laid my soul open before you, as I wish that it always should be to her whom I hope to call my wife. I see that I have distressed you—forgive me for it! love me still and confide in me! I will not deceive you!"

"So spoke Lennartson, and pressed me to his heart, and in that moment I felt my heart changed. O the high-mindedness of this man! and his good overcomes all that is mean and little in me, it directs me and shews me my path. I asked from Lennartson a few days' time for consideration, and set off for Svartsjö; not to hear the nightingales sing, but to listen to the inner voice, to collect myself, to *pray!* O Sophia! in these days and nights have I for the first time prayed from the bottom of my heart, and felt myself to be heard, and experienced the truth of the words, that 'The power of God is mighty to the weak.' In these days have I felt my will changed, my good resolutions strengthened, my mind renovated, and life and the world brighter before me.

"I returned to Stockholm to appear at the Castle-ball, I rouged my pale cheeks, I made myself as lovely and as brilliant as possible. I would in my pride yet once more triumph over the world, which I knew with malicious pleasure would busy itself about me. After this I would accomplish an important business, that is to release, to unite with one another—two noble human beings, and after that—to vanish from the scene. Look not so mysteriously questioning at me, Sophia; be calm! thoughts of self-destruction live no longer in my soul, for that it has received too great and too mild impressions.—My good angels, Selma and Lennartson, have chased the night out of me, and have let the day dawn; some beams of which must thank, must bless them. Fear no longer for me! the life and the suffering which I expect I shall bear in silence."

"O Flora!" exclaimed I with emotion, "how worthy are you of a more beautiful lot!"

"Do not pity me!" said Flora, with a clear and lively expression; "do not pity me, Sophia; I have won much, I have won that which I till now never possessed, *true human worth;* and in this moment I feel a certainty and a peace in my soul which I never enjoyed till now. I feel that I have risen, I feel that I shall rise in the eyes of all those whose approbation and esteem are valuable to me. O grant me this consciousness, however boastful it may appear, grant it to me, it will help me to go through a heavy, a bitter hour.

"No, for myself I do not lament. I feel that I have conquered. But rather will I lament for the many who, in a situation like my own, seek for such a helper, and go on for ever forlorn; who, through a false education, a misdirected guidance, are shattered from the beginning, and never more can collect themselves into a whole.

"Ah! even I am shattered irrevocably and shall never attain unity. Like a fragment of a better existence shall I go through life, perhaps merely as a warning for the present, to point towards a better future.

"Do you see that it is daylight! Do you see how the world brightens! O certainly will the twilight of humanity brighten also more and more! Certainly the comprehension of the great object of life, the true worth of a human being, will become ever more and more living in the human heart! Certainly will woman be more and more esteemed for her own human worth, and acknowledged in the truth of her being. And when she is so acknowledged, when she in social life has won her true position, as human being, as fellow-citizen, then first will she anew become a divine mother for the earth, and from her bosom will spring a renewed and ennobled human race!"

The fire of inspiration glowed in Flora's eyes, burned upon her cheeks, upon her eloquent lips—she was unspeakably beautiful. Beautiful also at this moment was the scene around us. The sun ascended and cast its first beams upon the heights, flamed on the spires of the church-towers, the mountains reddened; the windows of the Castle towards Logard lit themselves up. A soft sough filled with spring-life went through the trees of the field, and bowed the poplars on the river-parterre; the pennons in the haven fluttered merrily in the morning wind, and swelled by the rising Mälar-water, the foaming waves of the river rushed more grandly than ever through the arches of the North-bridge, and jubilant larks ascended above it, and snow-white sea-swallows dipped into it.

Long stood Flora and I, silently contemplating the increasing light and life; at length she directed her eyes to the haven, where a small black wreath of smoke raised itself, as if it would point out the way from Stockholm.

"Ha!" said she, "Gauthiod gives the sign already, and warns me to hasten."

"Will you travel abroad?" said I astonished.

"With Felix, with my poor brother!" answered Flora. "He has been ordered to make use of the baths at Ems, and I accompany him, both for his sake and mine. It is necessary to me at this moment to leave this place; I am here only a hinderance, and I must breathe the air of other lands. Felix remains to be my dearest care. He has never till now found the sister in me which he deserved. But from henceforth he shall find it. Perhaps sometime the brother and sister, who have suffered shipwreck in fortune and happiness, may return to

their fatherland with hearts healed, and more worthy as children.

"And what will you, what intend you for your own peculiar future?"

"First and foremost, to pass several years in foreign countries. Felix and I shall travel. I will observe the world with keen vision; I will observe woman in the new and higher relations of life and society, which the present time begins to form; I will see and judge rightly, and without prejudice, and then will choose an independent position in the realm of the beautiful or of the good, an interest, an ennobling aim for my restless striving soul. O Sophia! I will begin life anew! Yes, I feel it, the turning-point of my life is arrived! Farewell the past! Farewell wavering! Farewell illusions! And now a new sun, a new earth, a new life! And God's grace over my good designs!"

With this Flora raised towards heaven her clasped hands, and tears shone in her beaming eyes. Again we both were silent. I was deeply affected. She resumed more calmly—

"See here, Sophia, a letter to Selma; and here one to Lennartson. They will say all to them. They will also say to them, that the determination I have taken is the only way which remains for me to peace and happiness. No one, who is my friend, would seek to turn me from it. Gladly would I see my Selma once more; gladly view once more the pure countenance, the good clear eyes; but I must spare her the pain of parting—she has already suffered enough for me! But this garland (and she loosened the garland of white Provence roses from her head), this shall you, Sophia, lay on her bed at her feet, and let her keep it, and wear it as a remembrance of her Flora. I know that I do not deserve so pure a remembrance, but I know also that her soul cannot preserve any other of me without suffering. In Selma's letter I have also written to her mother; greet her, greet all whom you think trouble themselves about me, and tell them that I set off thus secretly, only to avoid parting, and spare them pain. And now I must hasten. Felix expects me; my things and my maid are already on board; I will now quickly dress myself, and then—Sophia, will you accompany me to the harbour?"

"To the world's end, if you will," replied I.

"Thanks! you hate me then no longer?"

"Hate you! I love, I admire—"

"Hush! hush! do not drive my virtue away!"

With these words Flora vanished. She was soon dressed ready for the journey, and I was ready to attend her. It was a lovely fresh morning, full of life and spring.

Amid serious yet cheerful conversation we went down to the harbour. Our parting was heartfelt, was full of unity. Flora was firm and steadfast to the last, and only when I could no longer see the waving of her white pocket-handkerchief in the far distance I left the strand. My heart was troubled, but as I returned to our home, and thought on what change of scenes had taken place, and what news I bore to my beloved; methought I had wings to soul and body—and wind and waves, and people and animals, and church-towers and street stones, and heaven and earth, methought joined in with my heart's exulting song—

The good has gained the victory!

O now I shall startle my stepmother! She and Selma sleep yet. They went to bed late, says Karin. I wait impatiently, and write while I wait. I would not exchange my lot with that of an archangel, if—(N. B.) he had anything else to do than carry glad tidings.

The 10th.

O Joy! thou beautiful, heavenly seraph! How loveable art thou, how worthy of adoration art thou, when thou arisest bright in the tearful eyes, and beamest in the looks of the dying! How good thou art when thou fillest life's cup to the brim for the happy and the noble on earth; merciful when thou withdrawest sad memories from the wretched, the unfortunate, and crownest his sleep with roses; how lovely and bright thou seemest to me, when I remark thy gentle movement in the human soul! O that thou wert an existence that I could call forth with my prayers, with my heart's blood, then shouldest thou oftener appear on earth!

But perhaps thou wouldest be less beautiful, less enchanting, if *sorrow*, did not precede thee like the sun, which never shines so beautifully on earth as after rain and tempest. Pain and joy are life's pair of wings, with which the human being raises himself to the home of perfection.

"The gentle movements of joy in the human soul!"

O! I have seen it to-day in my home, and among my beloved ones, although we do not venture to speak aloud thereon. Respect for Flora's memory and renunciation occasioned this; but the glory which her action threw over herself, penetrated more and more every sorrowful shadow.

Lennartson and Selma have bound themselves to each other as one being, who have long sought, and at last found each other, like two souls which were originally united in the thought of the Creator.

Their happiness has come forth out of much suffering, that now leaves free room for the play of joy; but on the other side of the clouds of the still melancholy which yet veils them, I heard the laugh of the god of love and the clapping of his wings. O the sylph will yet dance, dance upon the roses of life!

Flora's letter to Lennartson is such that he cannot do otherwise than accept the freedom which she returns to him. She shows herself determined and clear, and prays him to permit to her the consciousness which she has, of making two beloved human beings happy, and thus to regain theirs and her own esteem, "Remorse and self-contempt," writes she. "would henceforth persecute me at your side, Lennartson, and you would not have been able to shield me, for you could not love me. But, separated from you, I shall approach nearer to you. O Thorsten! I feel that, united to Selma, you will think of me with tenderness—I shall remain dear to you. Ah! perhaps it is rather egotism than pure love which guides me at this moment. If it be so—then forgive me!"

Lennartson's letter to Flora must throw into her soul a never to be extinguished beam of gladness and great self-satisfaction. And Flora is right; she will after this become more inti-

mately united with him than she would have been as his wife.

My stepmother is sweet, and amuses and affects me at the same time. She is silent and quiet, often lays her hands together and sighs; but her sighs carry a smile in them, and glad thoughts in her heart force themselves through the grave seriousness which she considers it becoming to assume. She talks therefore beautifully about "the wonderful ordinations of Providence, and of its being the duty of human beings to submit themselves." When will she have courage to become Prince Metternich again?

And I, for I also will be with—I participate, and rejoice, and hope, and am thankful—but in my heart I am not glad nor easy. I am uneasy about Wilhelm Brenner, and I am not pleased with myself.

Many people remain unmarried from noble and estimable reasons, but many also from—egotistical; that I feel in myself, and I acknowledge it with shame. One will gladly be beloved, will gladly warm oneself by the flame of a noble heart—yes, even give some warmth in return; as much, at least, as will not disturb our convenience, our ease. But for marriage, when this is bound up with some care, some trouble in the future—for that one has no courage, no virtue!

In the mean time I wonder whether I shall see the Viking again before his journey? Yet no! I wonder not! For if he will not, then *I will*; and "*ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut.*"*

The 13th of May.

Most extraordinary occurrence in the boudoir between my stepmother and me.

As we in the afternoon were together, ruling the state, we noticed an entirely unusual accordance in our measures and views. We congratulated each other thereon, inquiring after the cause of this approach of opinion; and then it appeared that my stepmother, while she read so much in certain royalist newspapers, had in some things come over to the opposition side, and I again, had through certain opposition newspapers been drawn by degrees more towards the government than before. Particularly pleased by these discoveries, and congratulating ourselves upon our independence, we determined henceforth, that we might hold the balance even, to hold ourselves as organs of both parties; and we concluded our political discussion, by playing 'patience' together.

The 14th.

Something must have gone out to the world of the altered condition and views of the family, for our 'spasmodical acquaintance,' who had allowed us neither to hear nor see anything of them during the dark period, live now again like gnats in the sunshine.

The Gyllenlöfs and Silfverlings overwhelmed us to-day with friendship and compliments. Lennartson came in, and then the friendship knew no bounds, but laid the boldest plans for the greatest intimacy for the future. My stepmother was polite, and let there be five formed at once; but Selma assumed her princess deportment, and replied somewhat coldly to Adele Gyllenlöf's evidences of friendship and young Silfverling's adoration.

The not spasmodic, but in all cases to us friendly and good Signora Luna cast a glance yesterday into the new and happy relationship of the family, and her lovely eyes beamed with joy at Flora's behaviour, at Selma and Lennartson's happiness. She herself was in full court costume, and so handsome and brilliant that I could not help saying—

"Signora Luna is now in her brightest glory, and must feel herself ready for a beaming path."

She cast upon me one of those looks which reveal the depths of silent suffering, and said—

"'Ah! all is not gold which glitters,' and the beaming path—but it goes well! All goes, although it seems at times as if all stood still."

Baron Alexander now approached, and said with his friendly imperiousness, 'I must remind you, my friend, that it is nearly nine o'clock. It is time to go to the court. This will be a splendid night."

"And I," said his wife softly to me, as she arose, "I could sigh to-night, like so many others, with Tegnér—

Tell me, thou watcher! how the night is wearing,
Will there then ever be an end of it?

"But seriously!" said I, "is it not amusing to be sometimes in such assemblies of the handsome and the bright; to see life in its holiday attire?"

"It might be truly so," said Signora Luna, "the more so that one comes in contact with many agreeable and distinguished persons—if the heart were only light! But—how few there are who go through life with light hearts! And perhaps it as well so, one might otherwise become too frivolous." She smiled pensively, moved to me, and vanished, obscured by the Great Alexander.

"Domestic happiness or unhappiness!" See then that which equalizes more than anything else, human lot; places often the hut beside the palace, the day-labourer near to the king; whilst it makes an immeasurable difference between the life and happiness of the mighty.

"Domestic troubles,"—wrote lamentingly a king who already is gone from the theatre of the world—"are in this respect different to public ones, that they bow down the soul by repeated pains, which every moment calls forth."

"I am the most fortunate man," wrote in a confidential letter, another king who yet bears upon his brow one of the noblest crowns of Europe, "and you will not find many who, like me, after a twenty years' acquaintance and a nineteen years' marriage, finds now the heart of his wife as divine, her eyes as heavenly, as in the first days of his love."

The 15th.

The Lady-Councillors of Commerce, Mrs. and Miss! Miss cast about her great peering glances, made significant gestures, and put sundry amusing questions, thus—

"Well! when shall you remove to Tornea? Has Miss Selma no desire to see a book, which is called 'Instructions in Frugal Housewifery?' I think it would be of use. Shall I purchase it for the young lady? The price is sixteen shillings banco."

A coffee-council, in the afternoon, between

* But to say the truth, I have never remarked that it is so in fact; neither do I know whether it would be advantageous that it should be so.

two happy mothers, my stepmother and Mrs. Rittersvärd. The first unclouded day in June will beam on the union of Ake Sparrsköld and Helfrid Rittersvärd.

Why write of all this? To try to forget that on which I now think.

The Viking sets sail on Sunday afternoon. The youngest boy is still confined to bed. Is it possible that Brenner will not see me, not say farewell to me before he sets off!

The 16*th.*

Letters from Flora have enlivened us all. The change shows itself to be enduring; her state of mind is astonishingly firm and clear. But why should people wonder at it? When once heaven has opened itself over a human head, has opened to his prayer, and it is a path upon which 'angels ascend and descend,' then that takes place in the human being which has not been calculated upon. Then powers are in motion, then communications take place, before which the wisest and best on earth bow themselves in wonder and reverence. But he must be left alone, alone with the Eternal.

That is also the last and highest stadium of all human education, of all higher development. For this, social life labours with all its wisest dogmas and institutions to elevate mankind. In strife with men, humanity never arrives there. Trusting in them, then is it a self-bewilderment. But sanctified and sustained by it, humanity ascends thither where even they cannot come. A new life, a new relationship then arises for it. The *immediate relationship* to the Eternal good, which will willingly give gifts to men, and give gifts of the Spirit without measure. This relationship on the side of the human being, I call child-like. It is the innermost of me. It may be attained by the most simple of men, if his will be good; and it can *not* be attained by the greatest philosopher, if he, after he have ascended the highest steps of logic, cannot as a child needing help, fall down upon his knees, and call upon his Father and the Father of all.

How happy was Lennartson this evening, as he, with his beloved Selma and her mother, laid out plans for their future life. How amiable he was, in the joy in the overswelling life to which he then for the first time gave free course! He let his bride have no peace at all, which naturally caused her some disquiet.

And my stepmother, what joy she had!

And I—O, I enjoyed myself in seeing them happy. I felt vividly the pleasantness of a life altogether with them (for I also, so it was said, shall have my home with Lennartson), in the sympathy in everything which life has interesting and elevating in art, in science, in public and private life, by intercourse with distinguished persons and their spheres of life.

O, I feel well how light and cheerful life must be in the daily enjoyment of what Ehrensvärd calls "the joyful needs," but—

But what sayst thou, silent talisman, which beats in my breast? And thou, Wisdom, baptized in the eternal waves of love—thou whom I have called to guide my feet, to light my life—what sayst thou?

Here a life filled with lovely enjoyments—comfortable, sunshiny, cheerful in the society of noble and worthy people, but who—need not me, and who without me have enough. And *there* a sinking home, which I could sustain, orphan children whose mother and cherisher I could be, a husband noble and good whom I could love; yes, whom I—love! A life of labour and care, but in which the Eternal eye would look down brighter upon me than in the other—a life not splendid on earth, but brightened by—

O, can I indeed hesitate?

But Mrs. Trollman?* Now, well! One magic spirit will chase away another. That has often been done.

But the world? How will it cross itself and say, "foolish marriage! marriage phrensy! madness!" Now, yes: "*Quand même!*"

Selma! Lennartson! I know what they would say. But my stepmother? How it would startle my stepmother!

To-day is Saturday.

On Sunday morning.

A note from the Viking—manly, cordial, but nothing less than unfeeling. Yet he says that he does not feel himself strong enough to take a personal leave of me; he does this, therefore, by writing; bids me to greet my friends from him, and hopes again to see me, and calls himself, in conclusion, my "faithful Wilhelm."

A bouquet of lovely flowers says more to me than the letter. But I regard it us unpardonable of my "faithful Wilhelm," not to see and hear his friend before he voyages to the world's end. I feel that the magic spirit moves within me.

In the Evening.

A very little time, a very little way lies often between the now and the moment which, as if with a magic stroke, changes the whole of our life's state, the whole of our future. We ourselves, for the most part, hold the magic wand in our hand; but whether we use it to create our happiness or our misfortune, that we often know not ourselves. I was, however, tolerably clear on the subject, as I set out the very moment in which Lennartson drove my stepmother and Selma in his beautiful landau to the park—set out slowly and alone on a walk toward the Skeppsholm. It was a quiet, somewhat dull, summer-mild afternoon. I saw the objects around me as though I was taking leave of them; thus greeted I the neighbourhood of the North-bridge, with its castles, statues, and quays along the river; I said farewell to the polite world. At the beginning of the Skeppsholm-bridge I stopped. Before me lay upon its blue waters the green Skeppsholm, with its valleys and groves, with its temple built upon the rock, and reflecting itself in the sea. Behind me roared dully the mass of driving, riding, walking people, who, in festal attire, streamed out to the park. I thought on the landua who conveyed out my friends into the gay, elegant world, and who had just now besought me so earnestly to take my place with them; my heart sunk; it was as if invisible hands fettered my feet and drew me back. That was a trying moment. Then began the church bells to ring; and even as the sound of the temple bells in ancient times had power to put heathen spirits to flight, so operated they even now on me. The contract-

* Troll is a ghost, a spectre.

ing bonds loosened, and I went onward excited, but yet resolved. And as I entered into the green groves—an old man has planted them, and beautified the evening of his life by beautifying his native city—as I looked upon the tender green leaves and thought upon the tender children, I became ever calmer and freer in mind.

When first the *long row*, or the admiralty-house, threw its dark shadow over me, a certain bashfulness returned, but of another kind. My act was unusual—how would it be judged, how would it look? And Brenner himself, how would he—

"The thousand!" said I, at last, in vexation—N.B. quite softly: "I care nothing about the whole world! I will really only say farewell to my friend! '*Honi soit qui mal y pense!*'"

Brenner was not at home, and was expected later. I was glad of that. I said to Mrs. Trollman, who came to me with this intelligence, and who did not appear to me like a dangerous magic spirit, that I would wait here till the Colonel's return, because I had something of importance to say to him. I would in the mean time look after little Wilhelm and the other children, in case she had anything else to do. Mrs. Trollman was very much pleased with this, and I soon perceived the smell of roasting coffee diffuse itself through the house. And now by the little boy's bed, and with all the other children around me, I began to relate histories, and to feel myself in particularly good spirits. My histories were interrupted by steps which were heard in the hall, and, by the assembled children's hasty and exultant outbreak to meet the beloved father. Soon was he beside his sick child, who called his name longingly. When he saw me, he remained standing in astonishment.

I rose up.

"Thou, here!" cried Brenner, and seizing my hand led me out into another room, motioning to the children to leave us together. "Thou here, Sophia!" repeated he, and looked at me with a searching glance.

I did not leave him a long time to bewilder himself, but said—

"How couldest thou think of leaving me without saying one friendly word at parting? It was not good, it was not right of thee. I could indeed believe, that thou troubled thyself no more me about than about a sea-gull!"

Tears almost choked me.

The Viking was silent, and I continued—

"Now we may see who best understands how to love his friend. Thou wilt not come to me, but I have come to thee, to say—farewell!"

"And thou hast come merely for that purpose! Thanks!" He pressed my hand.

It was now more difficult to continue. I was silent, he was silent. At length he compelled himself, and continued with a gentle suppressed voice, "thanks, that thou so kindly punishest my apparent negligence. May I now accompany thee home, and by so doing make it up with thy relatives."

"Go where thou wilt; I remain here. I—"

"How?"

"I remain with thy children, Wilhelm, till thou returnest from Africa."

Brenner looked at me for a moment, and his eyes filled with tears. "O thou woman's heart!" said he, took my hand, and continued with a penetrating glance, "and when I come back again, what wilt thou do then?"

"What—thou wilt!" replied I.

Brenner was again silent for a moment, and then said with an agitated voice—

"These are words which, some time ago, I would have given half the remainder of my life to have heard. But now—now it is otherwise. That which I then would do, will I now no longer."

I looked upon him questioningly, amazed.

"Now," continued Brenner, "my condition is much changed. I have nothing upon earth except—these poor children!"

"I know that!" answered I.

"I understand thee, Sophia," said Brenner pensively, "and this act surprises me not, from *thee*. But it involves a sacrifice which I neither can nor may accept. Thou refusedst thy hand to the well-conditioned man, thou shalt not give it to the beggar?"

"His kingly majesty has declared for me by word of mouth," said I, "I may do what I will with that which is my own."

"No!" replied Brenner, "that mayst thou not. For thy determination, although noble, is over hasty, and thou mayst not do that of which thou wilt repent. Thy calm life and thy property may not be sacrificed for a ruined family. That shall not be, say I! Canst thou believe me to be such an egotist, such a—"

"Be still, be still, about all that! The children may fancy that we are quarrelling, and it is not so. We can mutually think about it till thou comest home. Perhaps thou mayest find in Africa some beauty—"

"Hush then! what stupidity is that? But if I never come home? My voyage may continue long, may be stormy, dangerous—if I should never come home?"

"Then I remain here to be thy children's mother to my dying day."

"Sophia!" ejaculated Brenner hastily, "thou art an angel, and upon my knees must I thank thee for this word, this will. But yet, yet I cannot accept it. It is a sacrifice, and it is indiscreet, and it is unreasonable."

"Well then! let reason and understanding go!" replied I; "how is it worth while keeping these when one has given away one's heart!"

And now—I lay on the Viking's heart, clasped in his arms. He called me *his*, and challenged the whole world to part us. He placed his ring upon my finger, he led his children into my arms, he said that I would be their mother, he introduced me as his bride to Mrs. Trollman, who, in astonishment, nearly upset the coffee-pot.

"Now I shall attend thee home!" exclaimed he in conclusion; "I must tell the whole world that thou art mine!"

The Viking is somewhat stormy in his happiness, thought I, but he may now have his will. How it will startle my stepmother!

On the arm of the Viking I retraced my way home. His heart was over full, and how charming was it to me to listen to the swell of the waves within it; but when he kissed my hand directly under the nose of the watch (the nose of the watch of Skeppsholm), I was

obliged to beseech of him that he would not expose me, nor behave himself like a sea-robber !"

"Confess now," exclaimed he, "that thy philosophy has not helped thee much, has not prevented thee from venturing thy life with a sea-robber like me."

"Philosophy," exclaimed I; "it is precisely that which has conducted me to thee."

"Ah, bah! that I will not hear. Confess honestly out that it is love—pure, heavenly, irrational love !"

"No! not irrational—"

"Then rational love! now thou talkest well. Why use any ceremony about the word? It is really life's primal word—my beloved! And actual magic power hast thou never without it. Only do not come with 'Christian's love,' or I shall throw either thee or me into the sea !"

Of course I called him 'a heathen,' and such things. Amid such conversation we came home.

Fortunately it happened that we found my stepmother, Selma, and Lennartson, all together in the ante-room. The Viking threw the doors wide open, and with my hand clasped in his, he marched up into the middle of the floor, and introducing himself before the three sitting ones, exclaimed, "Congratulate us now! See you not that we are bridegroom and bride?"

With a cry of joy Lennartson sprang up and clasped us both in his arms, amidst the most cordial words. Selma sprang up also, half shocked, half glad, and embracing me exclaimed, "Sophia !"

And my stepmother, she sat quiet on the sofa, so struck, so astonished, so startled, that I thought she would have a stroke, and with that was quite terrified.

I now hastened up to her, kissed her hand, and besought her earnestly to forgive my apparent reserve; but that I myself, only two hours ago, did not know my destiny; and I began now a short explanation of the progress of the affair, but was interrupted by Brenner, who would relate the affair in his own way, and thus I fancy nobody rightly understood it, although every one was evidently affected and pleased, my stepmother also.

In the mean time the clock struck eight, and the Viking must go on board. As we now must part, it was hard for us.

"Accompany me to the linden trees below," prayed he; "I must still say a few words to thee under God's free heaven."

I went with him under the linden trees, which were gilded by the evening sun. We seated ourselves on a bench.

"Ah, here it is beautiful!" said Brenner. "Within there it was too narrow for me, too heavy to part from thee. In the morning I shall be upon my free sea; but thou, Sophia, wilt then be in a narrow and quiet dwelling, and that—for my sake."

"I shall be with thy children, Wilhelm!" said I.

"I have often," continued Brenner, "heard thee speak with dread of the heavy, the oppressive, the troublesome in life—of the suffering—Sophia! I fear, I fear for that which thou undertakest, for thy strength, thy stedfastness !"

"Thou dost not rightly know me, Wilhelm. Remember that I am of the people and race of the Wasastjernas! Besides—the suffering which I feared is *that* which fetters the soul, not *that* which elevates it, which ennobles it. Thou hast many times spoken of suffering as of what is noble, beautiful—and I have felt for some time that thou art right."

"Thou feelest therefore that thou wilt suffer, that thou mayst become mine?"

"Yes, Wilhelm; for I know that in the world there are storms, and manifold dangers, for those who are out upon the great sea; and I know that every stormy night will find me sleepless and anxious. But every evening and every morning I shall clasp together the hands of thy children in prayers for their father, and their innocent sighs shall part the clouds above thy head, and calm wind and wave. O Wilhelm, be easy about me! I am glad to love and to suffer. But," continued I, for I wished to calm Brenner's excited feelings, and give the conversation a more cheerful turn, "thou hast not given me any directions for the education of thy children. I presume that I must not teach them—philosophy?"

"Teach them in Heaven's name whatever thou wilt—yes, even philosophy, and especially that philosophy which gives thee to me. Teach them that love is the most beautiful wisdom. And now—I must leave thee, my, *my* Sophia. Remain here, let me see thy white figure under the blue heaven, under the green trees to the last!" He took my pocket-handkerchief, which was wet with tears, and hid it in his breast, as he said, "It shall be my Bethel-flag!" Yet once more he pressed my hand, yet once more his faithful glance sunk deep into my eyes, and down into the depths of my heart. He then moved off with great strides. Near the river, before he was hidden by the houses, he turned round once more and looked back, and waved a farewell with his hand. Thus vanished he from my sight. Slowly returned I home.

Lennartson was gone, in order to take leave of his friend, on board the frigate. My stepmother and Selma surrounded me. The former was evidently a little dissatisfied. But I now opened my heart to them both, and let them see all which had moved within it for some time.

I had the little egotistical pleasure of seeing my Selma's tears fall, because I must leave her; and the happiness to see that my stepmother perfectly approved of the resolution which I had taken, and did not altogether disapprove of my *mode* of action. A little troubled she was as to how it should be made known to the world, and how this would regard it; but after we had made all our '*reflexions chrétiennes et morales*' upon the circumstance, we found that the affair was not so dangerous; nor was the world either, if people only faced it with an honest mind and a polite manner.

As we separated for the night, my stepmother clasped round my arm a beautiful bracelet of her own hair, and said—

"You must not think, my sweet Sophia, that I did not suspect, that I did not in silence rightly see how all was going forward here, although I have said nothing! I have foreseen it altogether!"

"No! has my dear mother actually?" exclaimed I.

"Um, um, um, um!"

"Prince Metternich again!" thought I. "Good-night, my sweet, gracious mamma!" said I.

Monday morning, 26th of May.

Another day! another change of light and shade. Now friendly day! I salute thee in my new home. Mildly dawns life there.

Thither was I lately attended by my mother, Selma, and Lennartson. There I hope often to see them again.

Already I feel myself quite at home, and so is Mrs. Trollman with me. The upper magic spirit and the lower magic spirit have concluded a fundamental peace upon certain conditions, which stand in our Lord's hand. Merrily dance the waves without upon the Fjärd, and bear the Viking away from his home. I bear upon my breast some words from him, written on board the frigate, and conveyed to me I know not by what heavenly wind. There is *love* in them, and life's primeval word lives also in my heart.

Within, the children wake up out of the arms of sleep, and for me rise up cares for them, and for house and home.

An end now to my life of quiet observation and daily sketches. Away with thee, gossiping, but dear pen, which took up so much time! And in truth, when one has given away freedom, reason, and heart, then is it also well to lay aside—THE DIARY.

STRIFE AND PEACE:

OR,

SOME SCENES IN NORWAY.

CHAPTER I.

OLD NORWAY.

Still the old tempests rage around the mountains,
And ocean's billows, as of old, appear;
The roaring wood and the resounding fountains
Time has not silenced in his long career,
For Nature is the same as ever.

MUNCH.

The shadow of God wanders through Nature.

LINNÆUS.

BEFORE yet a song of joy or of mourning had gone forth from the valleys of Norway—before yet a smoke-wreath had ascended from its huts—before an axe had felled a tree of its woods—before yet king Nor burst forth from Jotunhem to seek his lost sister, and passing through the land gave to it his name: nay, before yet there was a Norwegian, stood the high Dovre mountains with snowy summits before the face of the Creator.

Westward stretches itself out the gigantic mountain chain as far as Romsdahlshorn, whose foot is bathed by the Atlantic ocean. Southward it forms under various names (Langfjeld, Sognefjeld, Filefjeld, Hardangerfjeld, and so forth), that stupendous mountainous district which in a stretch of a hundred and fifty geographical miles comprehends all that nature possesses of magnificent, fruitful, lovely, and charming. Here stands yet, as in the first days of the world, in Upper Tellemark, the Fjellstuga, or rock-house, built by an invisible hand, and whose icy walls and towers that hand alone can overthrow: here still as in the morning of time meet together at Midsummer, upon the snowy foreheads of the ancient mountains, the rose-tint of morning and the rose-tint of evening for a brotherly kiss; still roar as then the mountain torrents which hurl themselves into the abyss; still reflect the ice-mirrors of the glaciers the same objects—now delighting, now awakening horror; and still to-day, even as then, are there Alpine tracts which the foot of man never ascended; valleys of wood, "lonesome cells of nature," upon which only the eagle and the Midsummer-sun have looked down. Here is the old, ever young, Norway; here the eye of the beholder is astonished, but his heart expands itself; he forgets his own suffering, his own joy, forgets all that is trivial, whilst with a holy awe he has a feeling that "the shadow of God wanders through nature."

In the heart of Norway lies this country. Is the soul wearied with the tumults of the world or fatigued with the trifles of poor every-day life—is it depressed by the confined atmosphere of the room—with the dust of books, the dust of company, or any other kind of dust (there are in the world so many kinds, and they all cover the soul with a grey dust mantle); or is she torn by deep consuming passions—then fly, fly towards the still heart of Norway, listen there to the fresh mighty throbbing of the heart of nature; alone with the quiet, calm, and yet so eloquent, objects of nature, and there wilt thou gain strength and life! There falls no dust. Fresh and clear stand the thoughts of life there, as in the days of their creation. Wilt thou behold the great and the majestic? Behold the Gausta, which raises its colossal knees six thousand feet above the surface of the earth; behold the wild giant forms of Hurrungern, Fannarauk, Mugnafjeld; behold the Rjuhan (the rushing), the Vöring, and Vedal rivers foaming and thundering over the mountains and plunging down in the abysses! And wilt thou delight thyself in the charming, the beautiful? They exist among these fruitful scenes in peaceful solitude. The Säter-hut stands in the narrow valley; herds of cattle graze on the beautiful grassy meadows; the Sater-maiden, with fresh colour, blue eyes, and bright plaits of hair, tends them and sings the while the simple, the gentle melancholy airs of the country; and like a mirror for that charming picture, there lies in the middle of the valley a little lake (kjœrn), deep, still, and of a clear blue colour, as is generally peculiar to the glacier water. All breathes an idyllian peace.

But a presentiment of death appears, even in the morning hour of creation, to have impressed its seal upon this country. The vast shadows of the dark mountain masses fall upon valleys where nothing but moss grows; upon lakes whose still waters are full of never-melted ice—thus the Cold Valley, the Cold Lake (Koldedal and Koldesjö), with their dead, grey-yellow shores. The stillness of death reigns in this wilderness, interrupted only by the thunderings of the avalanche and by the noise which occasions the motion of the glaciers. No bird moves its wings or raises its twittering in this sorrowful region; only the melodious sighs of the cuckoo are borne thither by the winds at Midsummer.

Wilt thou, however, see life in its pomp and fairest magnificence? Then see the embrace of the winter and the summer in old Norway; descend into the plain of Svalem, behold the valleys of Aamaadt and Sillejord, or the paradisiacally beautiful Vestfjordal, through which the Man flows still and clear as a mirror, and embraces in its course little, bright green islands, which are overgrown with bluebells and sweet-scented wood-lilies; see how the silver stream

winds itself down from the mountains, between groups of trees and fruitful fields; see how, behind the near hills with their leafy woods, the snow-mountains elevate themselves, and like worthy patriarchs look down upon a younger generation; observe in these valleys the morning and evening play of colours upon the heights, in the depths; see the affluent pomp of the storm; see the calm magnificence of the rainbow, as it vaults itself over the waterfall—depressed spirit, see this, understand it, and—breathe!

From these beautifully, universally known scenes we withdraw ourselves to a more unknown region, to the great stretch of valley where the Skogshorn rears itself to the clouds; where Urunda flows brightly between rocks—the waterfalls of Djupadahl stream not the less charmingly and proudly because they are only rarely admired by the eyes of curious travellers. We set ourselves down in a region whose name and situation we council nobody to seek out in maps, and which we call—

HEIMDAL.

> Knowest thou the deep, cool dale,
> Where church-like stillness doth prevail;
> Where neither flock nor herd you meet;
> Which hath no name nor track of feet?
>
> VELHAVEN.

HEIMDAL we call a branch of Hallingdal, misplace it in the parish of Aal, and turn it over to the learned—that they may wonder at our boldness. Like its mother valley it possesses no historical memories. Of the old kings of Hallingdal one knows but very little. Only a few hewn stones, a few burial-mounds, give a dim intelligence of the mighty who have been. It is true that a people dwelt here, who from untold ages were renowned as well for their simplicity and their contentedness under severe circumstances as for their wild contest-loving disposition; but still, in quiet as in unquiet, built and dwelt, lived and died here, without tumult and without glory, among the ancient mountains and the pine-woods, unobserved by the rest of the world.

One river, the son of Halen-Jokul, flows through Heimdal. Foaming with wild rage, it comes through the narrow mountain-pass down into the valley, finds there a freer field, becomes calm, and flows clear as a mirror between green shores, till its banks become again compressed together by granite mountains. Then is it again seized upon by disquiet, and rushes thence in wild curves till it flings itself into the great Hallingdal river, and there dies.

Exactly there, where the stream spreads itself out, in the extended valley, lies a large estate. A well-built, but somewhat decayed, dwelling-house of wood, stretches out its arms into the depths of the valley. From there may be seen a beautiful prospect, far, far thence into the blue distance. Hills overgrown with wood, stretched upward from the river, and cottages surrounded with inclosed fields and beautiful grassy paths, lay scattered at the foot of the hills. On the other side of the river, a mile-and-half from the Grange, a chapel raised its peaceful tower. Beyond this, the valley gradually contracted itself.

On a cool September evening, strangers arrived at the Grange, which had now been long uninhabited. It was an elderly lady, of a noble but gloomy exterior, in deep mourning. A young, blooming maiden accompanied her. They were received by a young man, who was called there 'the Steward.' The dark-appareled lady vanished in the house, and after that was seen nowhere in the valley for several months. They called her there 'the Colonel's lady,' and said Mrs. Astrid Hjelm had experienced a very strange fate, of which many various histories were in circulation. At the estate of Semb, which consisted of the wide-stretching valley of Heimdal, which was her paternal heritage, had she never, since the time of her marriage, been seen. Now as widow she had again sought out the home of her childhood. It was known also and told, that her attendant was a Swedish girl, who had come with her from one of the Swedish watering-places, where she had been spending the summer, in order to superintend her housekeeping; and it was said, that Susanna Björk ruled as excellently as with sovereign sway over the economical department, over the female portion of the same, Larina the parlour-maid, Karina the kitchen-maid, and Petro the cook, as well as over the farm-servants, Mathea, Budeja, and Goran the cattle-boy, together with all their subjects of the four-footed and two-legged races. We will now with these last, make a little nearer acquaintance.

THE POULTRY. THE WATER OF STRIFE.

FIRST STRIFE.

> "For Norway!"
> "For Sweden!"
>
> DISPUTANTS.

THE morning was clear and fresh. The September sun shone into the valley; smoke rose from the cottages. The ladies'-mantle, on whose fluted cups bright pearls trembled; the silver-weed, with its yellow flowers and silver glittering leaves, shone in the morning sun beside the footpath, which wound along the moss-grown feet of the backs of the mountains. It conducted to a spring of the clearest water, which after it had filled its basin, allowed its playful vein to run murmuring down to the river.

To this spring, on that beautiful morning, went down Susanna Björk, and there followed her 'cocks and hens, and chickens small.'

Before her waddled with consequential gabblings a flock of geese, which were all snow-white, excepting one—a grey gander. This one tottered with a desponding look a little behind the others, compelled to this by a tyrant among the white flock, which, as soon as the grey one attempted to approach, drove it back with outstretched neck and yelling cries. The grey gander always fled before the white tyrant; but bald places upon the head and neck, proved that he had not come into this depressed condition without those severe combats having made evident the fruitlessness of protestation. Not one of the goose madams troubled herself about the ill-used gander, and for that reason Susanna all the more zealously took upon herself, with delicate morsels and kind words, to console him for the injustice of his race. After the geese, came the well-meaning but awkward ducks; the turkey-cock, with his choleric temper and his two foolish wives, one white and the other black; lastly, came the unquiet generation of hens, with their handsome, quarrel-loving cocks. The prettiest of all, however, were a flock of pigeons which, confidingly and bashfully at the same time, now alighted down upon Susanna's shoulders and outstretched hand; now flew aloft and wheeled in glittering circles around her head; then set-

tled down again upon the earth, where they neatly tripped, with their little fringed feet, stealing down to the spring to drink, whilst the geese with great tumult bathed themselves in the water and splashed about, throwing the water in pearly rain over the grass. Here also was the grey gander, to Susanna's great vexation, compelled by the white one to bathe itself at a distance from the others.

Susanna looked around her upon the beautiful richly coloured picture which lay before her, upon the little creatures which played around her and enjoyed themselves, and evident delight beamed from her eyes as she raised them, and with hands pressed together, said softly, "O heavens! how beautiful!"

But she shrunk together in terror, for in that very moment a strong voice just beside her broke forth—

> "How glorious is my fatherland,
> The old sea-circled Norroway!"

And the steward, Harald Bergman, greeted smilingly Susanna, who said rather irritated—

"You scream so, that you frighten the doves with your old Norroway."

"Yes," continued Harald, in the same tone of inspiration—

> "Yes, glorious is my fatherland,
> The ancient rock-bound Norroway;
> With flowery dale, crags old and grey,
> That spite of time eternal stand!"

"Old Norway," said Susanna as before; "I consider it a positive shame to hear you talk of your old Norway, as if it were older and more everlasting than the Creator himself!"

"And where in all the world," exclaimed Harald, "do you find a country with such a proud, serious people; such magnificent rivers, and such high, high mountains?"

"We have, thank God, men and mountains also in Sweden," said Susanna; "you should only see them; that is another kind of thing!"

"Another kind of thing! What other kind of thing? I will wager that there is not a single goose in Sweden which could compare with our excellent Norway geese."

"No, not one, but a thousand, and all larger and fatter than these. Every thing in Sweden is larger and more excellent than in Norway."

"Larger? The people are decidedly smaller and weaker."

"Weaker? smaller? you should only see the people in Uddevalla, my native city!"

"How can anybody be born in Uddevalla? Does anybody really live in that city? How can anybody live in it? It is a shame to live in such a city; it is a shame also only to drive through it. It is so miserably small, that when the wheels of the travelling-carriage are at one end, the horse has already put his head out at the other. Do not talk about Uddevalla!"

"No, with you it certainly is not worth while to talk about it, because you have never seen anything else besides Norwegian villages, and cannot, on that account, form any idea to yourself of a proper Swedish city."

"Defend me from ever seeing such cities—defend me! And then your Swedish lakes! what wretched puddles they are, beside our glorious Norwegian ocean!"

"Puddles! Our lakes! Great enough to drown the whole of Norway in!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And the whole of Sweden is beside our Norwegian ocean no bigger than my cap! And this ocean would incessantly flow over Sweden, did not our Norway magnanimously defend it with its granite breast."

"Sweden defends itself, and needs no other help! Sweden is a fine country!"

"Not half as fine as Norway. Norway reaches heaven with its mountains; Norway comes nearest to the Creator."

"Norway may well be presumptuous, but God loves Sweden the best."

"Norway, say I!"

"Sweden, say I!"

"Norway! Norway for ever! We will see whose throw goes the highest, who wins for his country. Norway first and highest!" and with this, Harald threw a stone high into the air.

"Sweden first and last!" exclaimed Susanna, while she slung a stone with all her might.

Fate willed it that the two stones struck against each other in the air, after which they both fell with a great plump down into the spring around which the small creatures had assembled themselves. The geese screamed; the hens and ducks flew up in terror; the turkey-hens flew into the wood, where the turkey-cock followed them, forgetting all his dignity; all the doves had vanished in a moment—and with crimsoned cheeks and violent contention as to whose stone went the highest, stood Harald and Susanna alone, beside the agitated and muddied water of discord.

The moment is perhaps not the most auspicious, but yet we will make use of it, in order to give a slight sketch of the two contending persons.

Harald Bergman had speaking, somewhat sharp features, in which an expression of great gravity could easily be exchanged for one of equal waggery. The dark hair fell in graceful waves over a brow in which one saw that clear thought was entertained. His figure was finely proportioned, and his movements showed great freedom and vigour.

He had been brought up in a respectable family, had enjoyed a careful education, and was regarded by friends and acquaintances as a young man of extraordinary promise. Just as he had left the S. seminary, and was intending a journey into foreign countries, in order to increase still more his knowledge of agriculture, chance brought him acquainted with the widow of Colonel Hjelm, at the time in which she was returning to her native country, and in consequence thereof he altered his plans. In a letter to his sister, he expresses himself on this subject in the following manner—

"I cannot properly describe to you, Alette, the impression which she made upon me. I might describe to you her tall growth, her noble bearing, her countenance, where, spite of many wrinkles and a pale-yellow complexion, traces of great beauty are incontrovertible; the lofty forehead, around which black locks sprinkled with gray, press forth from beneath her simple cap. I might tell of her deep, serious eyes, of her low and yet solemn voice; and yet thou couldst form to thyself no representation of that which makes her so uncommon. I have been told that her life has been as much distinguished by exemplary virtue as by suffering—and virtue and suffering have called forth in her a quiet greatness, a greatness which is never attained to by the favourites of fortune and of nature, which stamps her whole being. She seemed to me, as if all the frivolities of the world passed by her unremarked. I felt for her an involuntary rev-

erence, such as I had never felt before for any human being; and at the same time a great desire to approach her more nearly, to be useful to her, to deserve, and to win her esteem—it seemed to me that I should thereby become somewhat greater, or at least better; and as I was informed that she sought for a clever and experienced steward for her sorely decayed estate, I offered myself as such, in all modesty, or rather without any; and when accepted, I felt an almost childish joy, and set off immediately to her estate, that I might make myself at home there, and have every thing in readiness to receive her."

Thus much for Harald, now for Susanna.

Barbara Susanna Björk was not handsome, could not be even called pretty (for that, she was too large and strong), but she was good-looking. The blue eyes looked so honestly and openly into the world; the round and full face testified health, kindness, and good spirits; and when Susanna was merry, when the rosy lips opened themselves for a hearty laugh, it made any one right glad only to look at her. But true is it, that she was very often in an ill-humour, and then she did not look at all charming. She was a tall, well-made girl, too powerful in movement ever to be called graceful, and her whole being betrayed a certain want of refinement.

Poor child! how could she have obtained this in the home abounding in disorder, poverty, and vanity, in which the greater part of her life had been passed.

Her father was the Burgomaster of Uddevalla; her mother died in the infancy of her daughter. Soon afterwards an aunt came into the house, who troubled herself only about the housekeeping and her coffee-drinking acquaintance, left her brother himself to seek for his pleasures at the club, and the child to take care of herself. The education of the little Susanna consisted in this, that she learned of necessity to read, and that when she was naughty they said to her, "Is Barbra there again? Fie, for shame, Barbra! Get out, Barbra!" and when she was good again, it was, "See now, Sanna is here again! Welcome, sweet Sanna!" A method which certainly was not without its good points, if it had only been wisely applied. But often was the little girl talked to as "Barbra," when there was no occasion for it, and this had often the effect of calling forth the said personage. In the mean time she was accustomed as a child to go out as Barbra, and come in again as Sanna, and this gave her early an idea of the two natures which existed in her, as they exist in every person. This idea attained to perfect clearness in Susanna's religious instruction, the only instruction which poor Susanna ever had. But how infinitely rich is such instruction for an ingenuous mind, when it is instilled by a good teacher. Susanna was fortunate enough to have such a one, and she now became acquainted in Barbra with the earthly demon which should be overcome in Sanna, the child of heaven, which makes free and enlightens; and from this time there began between Barbra and Sanna an open strift which daily occurred, and in which the latter, for the most part, got the upper hand, if Susanna was not too suddenly surprised by a naturally proud and violent temper.

When Susanna had attained her twelfth year her father married a second time, but became a second time a widower, after his wife had presented him with a daughter. Two months after this he died also. Near relations took charge of the orphan children. In this new home Susanna learned to—bear hardships; for there, as she was strong and tall, and besides that made herself useful, and was kind-hearted, they made her soon the servant of the whole house. The daughters of the family said that she was fit for nothing else, for she could learn nothing, and had such unrefined manners; and besides that, she had been taken out of charity; she had nothing, and so on: all which they made her feel many a time in no gentle manner, and over which Susanna shed many tears both of pain and anger. One mouth, however, there was which never addressed to Susanna other tones than those of affectionate love, and this was the mouth of the little sister, the little golden-haired Hulda. She had found in Susanna's arms her cradle, and in her care that of the tenderest mother. For from Hulda's birth Susanna had taken the little forlorn one to herself, and never had loved a young mother her first-born child more warmly or more deeply than Susanna loved her little Hulda, who also, under her care, became the loveliest and the most amiable child that ever was seen. And wo to those who did any wrong to the little Hulda! They had to experience the whole force of Susanna's often strong-handed displeasure. For her sake Susanna passed here several years of laborious servitude: as she, however, saw no end to this, yet was scarcely able to dress herself and her sister befittingly, and besides this was prevented by the multitude of her occupations from bestowing upon her sister that care which she required, therefore Susanna, in her twentieth year, looked about her for a better situation.

From the confined situation in which Susanna spent such a weary life, she was able to see one tree behind a fence, which stretched out its branches over the street. Many a spring and summer evening, when the rest of the inhabitants of the house were abroad on parties of pleasnre, sate Susanna quietly by the little slumbering Hulda, within the little chamber which she had fitted up for herself and her sister, and observed with quiet melancholy from her window the green tree, whose twigs and leaves waved and beckoned so kindly and invitingly in the wind.

By degrees the green leaves beckoned into her soul thoughts and plans, which eventually fashioned themselves into a determined form, or rather an estate, whose realization from this time forth became the paradise of her soul and the object of her life. This estate was a little farm in the country, which Susanua would rent, and cultivate, and make profitable by her own industry and her own management. She planted potatoes; she milked cows and made butter; she sowed, she reaped; and the labour was to her a delight; for there, upon the soft grass, under the green, waving tree, sate the little Hulda, and played with flowers, and her blue eyes beamed with happiness, and no care and no want came anear her.

All Susanna's thoughts and endeavours directed themselves to the realizing of this idea. The next step towards it was the obtaining a good service, in which, by saving her wages, she could obtain a sum of money sufficient to commence her rural undertaking. Susanna flattered herself, that in a few years she could bring her scheme to bear, and therefore made inquiries after a suitable situation.

There were this year among the visitors at the watering-place of Gustafsberg, which lay near to Uddevalla, a Norwegian Colonel and his lady. He was lame from a paralytic stroke, and had lost the use of speech and of his hands. He was a large man, of a fierce, stern exterior; and although he seemed to endure nobody near him but his wife, and perpetually demanded her care, still it was evidently not out of love. And although his wife devoted herself unweariedly and self-denyingly to his service, still this evidently was not from love either, but from some other extraordinary power. Her own health was visibly deeply affected, and violent spasms often attacked her breast; but night or day, whenever it was his will to rise, it was her patient, bowed neck around which his arm was laid. She stood by his side, and supported him in the cold shower-bath, which was intended to re-awaken his dormant power of life, at the same time that it destroyed hers. She was ever there, always firm and active, seldom speaking, and never complaining. By the painful contraction of her countenance alone, and by the peculiarity of laying her hand upon her heart, it could be seen that she suffered. Susanna had an opportunity of seeing all this, and admiration and sympathy filled her breast. Before long she was fortunate enough to assist the noble lady, to offer to her her strong youthful arm as support, and to watch over the sick man when his wife was compelled to close her eyes from fatigue. And fortunately the invalid endured her. Susanna was witness of the last horrible scenes by the death-bed of the Colonel. He seemed to make violent efforts to say something, but — he could not. Then he made signs that he wished to write something; but his fingers could not hold the pen. Then presented itself a horrible disquiet on his distorted features. With that his wife bowed herself over him, and with an expression of the greatest anxiety, seized one of his hands and whispered —"Give me only a sign, as answer! Tell me! Tell me! does he yet live?"

The sick man riveted upon her a strong gaze, and—bowed his head. Was this an assenting answer, or was it the hand of death which forbad an answer? No one could tell, for he never again raised his head. It was his last movement.

For many days afterwards a quick succession of spasmodic attacks seemed to threaten the widowed lady with approaching death. Susanna watched incessantly beside her, and felt herself happy in being able to watch over her and to serve her. Susanna had conceived an almost passionate devotion for Mrs. Astrid; such as young girls often feel for elderly, distinguished women, to whom they look up as to the ideal of their sex. And when Mrs. Astrid returned to Norway, Susanna kissed with tears her little Hulda, but yet felt herself happy to follow such a mistress, and to serve her in the rural solitude to which she betook herself. Susanna journeyed to the foreign country, but retained deep in her heart her little Hulda and her life's plan.

MRS. ASTRID.

> Did ye but feel, O stars! who see
> The whole earth's silent misery,
> Then never would your glances rest
> With such calm radiance on her breast.
>
> HENR WERGELAND.

As Susanna withdrew from Harald, and from the water of discord, she was quite in an excited and bad temper; but as soon however as she approached the wing of the house which Mrs. Astrid inhabited, she became calmer. She looked up to her window, and saw there her noble but gloomy profile. It was bent down, and her head seemed as it were depressed by dark thoughts. At this sight, Susanna forgot all her own ill humour. "Oh!" sighed she, "if I could only make her happier!"

This was Susanna's daily subject of thought, but it became to her every day a darker riddle. Mrs. Astrid appeared to be indifferent to every thing around her here. Never did she give an order about anything in the house, but let Susanna scold there and govern just as she would. Susanna took all the trouble she could to provide the table of her mistress with every thing good and delicious which lay in her power; but to her despair the lady ate next to nothing, and never appeared to notice whether it was prepared well or ill.

Now before Susanna went into the house, she gathered several of the most beautiful flowers which the autumn frost had spared, made a nosegay of them, and with these in her hand stept softly into Mrs. Astrid's room.

'Bowed with grief,' is the expression which describes Mrs. Astrid's whole being. The sickly paleness of her noble countenance, the depressed seldom-raised eyelids, the inanimate languor of her movements, the gloomy indifference in which her soul seemed to be wrapped, —like her body in its black mourning habiliments, when she sate for hours in her easy chair, often without occupation, the head bowed down upon the breast; all this indicated a soul which was severely fettered by long suffering.

Suffering in the north has its own peculiar character. In the south it burns and consumes. In the north it kills slowly; it freezes, it petrifies by degrees. This has been acknowledged for untold ages, when our forefathers sought for images of that which they felt to be the most terrible in life; thus originated the fable of the subterranean dwelling of Hela, of the terrors of the shore of corpses—in one word, the 'Hell of the North, with its infinite, treeless wildernesses; with cold, darkness, mist, clammy rivers, chill, distilling poison, cities resembling clouds filled with rain, feetless hobgoblins,' and so on.

In the Grecian Tartarian dance of the Furies there is life and wild strength, there is in its madness a certain intoxication which deprives it of its feeling of deep misery. The heart revolts not so much from these pictures of terror, as from the cold, clammy, dripping ones which the chill north exhibits—ah! not alone in poetry.

As Susanna entered the apartment of Mrs. Astrid, she found her sitting, as usual, sunk in deep melancholy. Upon a table before her lay paper and pens, and a book, in which she appeared to have been reading. It was the Bible; it lay open at the book of Job, and the following passages were underlined—

> My soul is weary of my life, for my days are vanity.
> Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.

Mrs. Astrid's eyes were riveted upon these last words, as Susanna softly, and with a warm heart, approached her, and with a cordial "Ah! be so good," presented to her the nosegay.

The lady looked up at the flowers, and an expression of pain passed over her countenance as she turned away her head and said, "They are beautiful, but keep them, Susanna; they are painful to my eyes."

She resumed her former position, and Susanna much troubled drew back; after a short silence, however, she again ventured to raise her voice, and said, "We have got to-day a beautiful salmon-trout, will you not, Mrs. Astrid, have it for dinner? Perhaps with egg-sauce, and perhaps I might roast a duck, or a chicken—"

"Do whatever you like, Susanna," said the lady, interrupting her and with indifference. But there was something so sorrowful in this indifference, that Susanna, who had again approached her, could not contain herself; she quickly threw herself before her mistress, clasped her knees, and said—

"Ah, if I could only do something to please my lady; if I could only do something."

But Susanna's warm glance, beaming with devotion, met one so dark that she involuntarily started back.

"Susanna," said Mrs. Astrid, as with gloomy seriousness she laid her hand upon her shoulder and gently put her back, "gratify me in one thing, attach not thyself to me. It will not lead to good. I have no attachment to give—my heart is dead! Go, my child," continued she more kindly, "go, and do not trouble thyself about me. My wish, the only good thing for me, is to be alone."

Susanna went now, her heart filled with the most painful feelings. "Not trouble myself about her!" said she to herself, as she wiped away a tear, "not trouble myself about her, as if that were so easy."

After Susanna was gone, Mrs. Astrid threw a melancholy glance upon the papers which lay before her. She seized the pen, and laid it down again. She seemed to shudder at the thought of using it; at length she overcame herself, and wrote the following letter:—

"You wish that I should write to you. I write for that reason; but what—what shall I say to you? My thanks for your letter, my paternal friend, the teacher of my youth; thanks that you wish to strengthen and elevate my soul. But I am old, bowed down, wearied, embittered—there dwells no strength, no living word more in my breast. My friend, it is too late—too late!

"You would raise my glance to heaven; but what is the glory of the sun to the eye that—sees no longer? What is the power of music to the deaf ear? What is all that is beautiful, all that is good in the world, to the heart that is dead; that is turned to stone in a long severe captivity? Oh, my friend! I am unworthy of your consolation, of your refreshing words. My soul raises itself against them, and throws them from herself as 'words, words, words,' which have sounded beautifully and grandly for thousands of years, whilst thousands of souls are inconsolably speechless.

"Hope? I have hoped so long. I have already said to myself so long, 'a better day comes! The path of duty conducts to the home of peace and light, be the way ever so full of thorns. Go only steadfastly forward, weary pilgrim, go, go, and thou wilt come to the holy land!' And I have gone—I have gone on through the long, weary day, for above thirty years; but the way stretches itself out farther and farther—my hopes have withered, have died away, the one after the other;—I see now no goal, none; but the grave! Love, love! Ah, if you knew what an inexpressibly bitter feeling this word awakens in me! Have I not loved, loved intensely? And what fruit has my love borne? It has broken my heart, and has brought unhappiness to those whom I loved. It is in vain that you would combat a belief which has taken deep root in me. I believe that there are human beings who are born and pre-ordained to misfortune, and who communicate misfortune to all who approach them, and *I believe that I belong to these.* Let me, therefore, fly from my kind, fly from every feeling which binds me to them. Why should I occasion more mischief than I have already done?

"Why do you desire me to write? I wish not to pour my bitterness into the heart of another; I wish to grieve no one, and—what have I now done?

"There is a silent combat which goes through the world, which is fought out in the reserved human heart, and at times—fearfully! It is the combat with evil and bitter thoughts. They are such thoughts as sometimes take expression, expression written in fire and blood. Then are they read before the judgment-seat and condemned. In many human hearts, however, they rage silently for long years; then are undermined by degrees, health, temper, love, faith, faith in life and faith in—a good God. With this sinks every thing.

"Could I believe that my devoted, true pilgrimage by the side of a husband whom I once so tenderly loved, and for whose sake I dragged on life in the fortress of which he was the commander, in comparison of which the life of the condemned criminal is joy; whom I followed faithfully, though I no longer loved him, because it was needful to him; because, without me, he would have been given over to dark spirits—followed, because right and duty demanded it; because I had promisel it before God—Oh! could I believe that this fidelity had operated beneficially,—that my endeavours had borne any fruit—I should not then, as now, ask 'why was I born? why have I lived?' But nothing, nothing!

"Could I think that on the other side of the grave I should meet the gentle loving look of my only sister—would I gladly die. But what should I reply to her, if she asked after her child of sorrow? How would she look upon the unfaithful protectress?

"O my friend! My misfortune has nothing in common with that of romances, nothing with that of which the most deep shades only serve to set off the most beautiful lights. It is a wearisome winter twilight; which only conducts to a deeper night. And am I alone in this condition? Open the pages of history, look around you in the present day, and you will see a thousand-fold sufferings, unmerited sufferings, which after long agony lead—to despair. But another, a happier life! Only consolation, only hope, only true point of light in the darkness of earthly existence!—no, no! I will not abandon thee! I will trust in thee; and in this belief will be silenced the murmurings which so often arise against the Creator of the world.

"I am ill, and do not believe that I shall live over this winter. Breathing is difficult to me; and perhaps the inexpressible heaviness which burdens me may contribute to this torment. When I sit up sleepless in my bed through the long nights, and see the night in myself, behind me and before me, then dark, horrible phantasies surround me, and I often think that insanity with ashy cheeks, stony and rigid gaze, approaches me, will darken my reason and bewil-

der my mind. How can I wish to live? When it is evening, I wish it were morning; and when it is morning, I wish that the day was over, and that it were again evening. Every hour is to me a burden and a torment.

"For this cause, my friend, pray God for me that I may soon die! Farewell! Perhaps I may write no more. But my last clear thought will be for you. Forgive the impatience, the bitterness, which shows itself in this letter. Pray for me, my friend and teacher, pray that I may be able to compose myself, and to pray yet before I die!"

NEW CONTENTIONS.

We're living a peculiar life,
With serious words and serious strife.
MUNCH.

WHILST we leave the pale Mrs. Astrid alone with her dark thoughts, we are led by certain extraordinary discords to look around in

THE BREWHOUSE.

Harald found himself there for the purpose of tasting the new beer which Susanna had brewed; but before he had swallowed down a good draught, he said, with a horrible grimace, "It is good for nothing—good for nothing at all!"

Somewhat excited, Susanna made reply, "Perhaps you will also assert that Baroness Rosenhjelm's brewing-recipe is good for nothing!"

"That I assert decidedly. Does not she give coffee-parties? And a coffee-bibber is always a bad housewife, and as Baroness Rosenhjelm is a coffee-bibber, therefore—"

"I must tell you," interrupted Susanna, vehemently, "that it is unbecoming and profane of you to talk in this way of such an excellent lady, and a person of such high rank!"

"High! How high may she be?"

"A deal higher than you are, or ever can be, that I can assure you!"

"Higher than me! then of a certainty she goes on stilts. Now, I must say that is the very tip-top of gentility and politeness! One may forgive a lady giving coffee-parties, and decorating and dressing herself up, but to go on stilts, only on purpose to be higher than other folks, and to be able to look over their heads, that is coming it strong over us! How can such a high person ever come down low enough to brew good beer? But a Swedish woman can never brew good beer, for——"

"She will not brew a single drop for you abominable Norwegians, for you have neither reason, nor understanding, nor taste, nor——"

Out of the brewhouse flew Susanna, in the highest indignation, throwing down a glass of beer which Harald had poured out during the contention, for her, but which now would have gone right over if he had not saved it by a spring.

Towards the evening of the same day we see the contending parties again met in

THE GARRET.

"Are you yet angry?" asked Harald, jokingly, as he stretched in his head through the garret-door, where Susanna was sitting upon a flour-tub, as on a throne, with all the importance and dignity of a store-room queen, holding in her hand a sceptre of the world-famous sweet herbs—thyme, marjoram, and basil, which she was separating into little bundles, whilst she cast a searching glance around her well-ordered kingdom.

The bread-chests were heaped up, for she had just baked oaten-bread; bacon-sausages and hams hung, full of gravy, from the roof, as well as great bundles of dried fish; little bags full of all kinds of vegetables stood in their appointed places, and so on.

Harald looked also around the garret, and truly, with the eye of a connoisseur, and said, although he had yet received no answer to his question—

"It is certain that I never saw a better provided or better arranged store-room!"

Susanna would not exhibit one gleam of the pleasure she felt at this praise.

"But," continued Harald, "you must confess that it does not require so very much skill to preserve the store-room and cellar well supplied in a country so rich in all the good things of life as our Norway—

Well-beloved land, with heaven-high mountains,
Fruit-bearing valleys, and fish-giving shores."

"Fish also have we, thank God, in Sweden;" replied Susanna, dryly.

"O, but not to compare with our fish! Or would you seriously set your perch and carp against our mackerel, herrings, haddocks, flounders, and all our unparalleled quantities of fish?"

"All your Norwegian kind of fish I would give for one honest Swedish pike."

"A pike? Is there then in Sweden really nothing but pike?"

"In Sweden there are all kinds of fish that there are in Norway, and a great deal bigger and fatter."

"Yes, then they come from our coasts. We take what we want, and that which remains we let swim to Sweden, that down there they may have somewhat also. But I have forgotten that I myself am going a fishing, and will catch little fishes, great fishes, a deal of fish. Adieu, Mamsel Susanna. I shall soon come back with fish!"

"You had best stop with your Norwegian fishes!" cried Susanna after him.

But Harald did not stop with the fishes. On the morrow we see him following Susanna into

THE DAIRY.

"I see that we are going to have to-day for dinner onion-milk, one of our most delicious national dishes, and my favourite eating."

"Usch! One gets quite stupid and sleepy when one only thinks on your national dishes. And still more horrible than your onion-milk, and more unnatural too, is your fruit-soup with little herrings!"

"Fruit-soup with little herrings! Nay, that is the most superexcellent food on the earth, a food which I might call a truly Christian dish!"

"And I might call it a heathenish dish, which no true Christian man could eat."

"From untold ages it has been eaten by free Norwegian men in the beautiful valleys of Norway."

"That proves that you free Norwegians are still heathens."

"I can prove to you that the Norwegians were a Christian people before the Swedes."

"That you may prove as much as you like, but I shall not believe it."

"But I will show it to you in print."

"Then I shall be certain that it is a misprint."

Harald laughed, and said something about the impossibility of disputing with a Swedish woman.

Should now anybody wish to know how it happens that one finds Harald so continually in Susanna's company in the brewhouse, in the store-room, in the dairy, we can only reply that he must be a great lover of beer, and flour, and milk, or of a certain spice in the every-day soup of life, called bantering.

Mrs. Astrid always breakfasted in her own room, but dined with Harald and Susanna, and saw them often for an hour in the evening. Often during dinner did the contention about Norway and Sweden break out, for the slightest occasion was sufficient to make the burgomaster's daughter throw herself blindly into the strife for fatherland; and strange enough, Mrs. Astrid herself sometimes seemed to find pleasure in exciting the contest, as she brought upon the carpet one question or another, as—

"I should like to know whether cauliflower is better in Norway or Sweden?" or, "I should like to know whether the corn is better in Sweden or in Norway?"

"Quite certainly in Norway," said Harald.

"Quite decidedly in Sweden," cried Susanna. And vegetables and fish, and the coinage, and measures and weights, were all handled and contended for in this way.

Of the corn in Norway, Susanna said, "I have not seen upon this whole estate one single straw which may bear a comparison with that which I have seen in Sweden."

"The cause of that," said Harald, "is because you saw here good corn for the first time."

Of the Norwegian weights, Susanna said, "I never know what I am about with your absurd, nasty Norwegian weights."

"They are heavier than the Swedish," replied Harald.

Whenever Susanna became right vehement and right angry, then—it is shocking to say it, Harald laughed with his whole heart, and at times a faint smile brightened also Mrs. Astrid's pale face, but it resembled the gleam of sunshine which breaks forth in a dark November sky, only to be immediately concealed behind clouds.

Susanna never thought in the least, on these occasions, of putting the bridle on the Barbra temper. She considered it as a holy duty to defend the fatherland in this manner.

But the spirit of contention did not always reign between Harald and Susanna. At intervals the spirit of peace also turned towards them, although as a timid dove, which is always ready soon to fly away hence. When Susanna spoke, as she often did, of that which lived in the inmost of her heart; of her love to her little sister, and the recollections of their being together; of her longings to see her again, and to be able to live for her as a mother for her child, —then listened Harald ever silently and attentively. No jeering smile nor word came to disturb these pure images in Susanna's soul. And how limningly did Susanna describe the little Hulda's beauty; the little white child, as soft as cotton-wool, the pious blue eyes, the white little teeth, which glanced out whenever she laughed like bright sunshine, which then lay spread over her whole countenance; and the golden locks which hung so beautifully over forehead and shoulders, the little pretty hands, and temper and heart lively, good, affectionate! Oh! she was in short an angel of God! The little chamber, which Susanna inhabited with her little Hulda, and which she herself had changed from an unused lumber-room into a pretty chamber, and whose walls she herself painted, she painted now from memory yet once more for Harald; and how the bed of the little Hulda was surrounded with a light-blue muslin curtain, and how a sunbeam stole into the chamber in the morning, in order to shine on the pillow of the child, and to kiss her little curly head. How roguish was the little one when Susanna came in late at night to go to bed, and cast her first glance on the bed in which her darling lay. But she saw her not, for Hulda drew her little head under the coverlet to hide herself from her sister. Susanna then would pretend to seek for the little one; but she needed only to say with an anxious voice, "where—ah, where is my little Hulda?" in order to decoy forth the head of the little one, to see her arms stretched out, and to hear her say, "Here I am, Sanna! here is thy little Hulda!" And she had then her little darling in her arms, and pressed her to her heart; then was Susanna happy, and forgot all the cares and the fatigues of the day.

At the remembrance of these hours Susanna's tears often flowed, and prevented her remarking the tearful glow which sometimes lit up Harald's eyes.

Harald, however, had also his relations; not, it is true, of so tender a nature, but yet interesting enough to lay claim to all Susanna's attention, and to give us occasion to commence a new chapter.

EVENING HOURS.

> I like the life, where rule and line appeareth,
> In the mill's clapping and the hammer's blow;
> I give to him the path who burthens beareth,
> He worketh for a useful end I know.
> But he, who for the klip-klap never heareth
> The call of bells to feeling's holiday—
> Hath but sham-life, mechanically moving,
> Soul-less he is, unconscious and unloving.
> Fly, agile arrow, rattling in thy speeding
> Over the busy emmet's roof of clay,
> And waken spiritual life! Foss

Harald related willingly, and related uncommonly well; an entertaining and a happy gift, which one often meets with in Norway among all classes, both in men and women, and which they appear to have inherited from their ancestors the Scalds; and besides this, he was well acquainted with the natural wonders and legends of the mountain region.

And it is precisely in mountain regions where the most beautiful blossoms of the people's poetry have sprung as if from her heart. The ages of the Sagas and the heathens have left behind their giant traces. River and mountain have their traditions of spectres and transformations; giant 'cauldrons' resound in the mountains, and monumental stones are erected over warriors, who 'buckled on their belts,' and fell in single combat. From Halingdal went forth the Norwegian national Polska (the Halling), and only the Hardanger-fela (the Hallingdal fiddle), can rightly give its wild, extraordinary melody. Most beautiful are the flowers of remembrance which the christian antiquity exhibits, and the eternal snow upon the crowns of the ancient mountains is not more imperishable than these innocent roses at their feet. So long as Gausta stands, and the Rjukan sings his thunder-song, will the memory of Mari-Stein live, and his tales of joy and sorrow be told; so long as the ice-sea of Folge-

fond rests over his silent, dark secrets,* so long will the little island become green, of which it is said, that it is eternally wetted with the tears of true love.

Be it who it may—they who write with their own life, song and legend, who express the depths of being by the silent but mighty language of deeds—they are the real authors, the first poets of the earth. In the second rank stand those who relate that which the others have lived.

When the day's work was over, and Mrs. Astrid had again betaken herself to her chamber after her slight evening meal, it gave Harald great pleasure to read aloud or to relate histories to Susanna, whilst she sewed, or her spinning-wheel hummed often in lively emulation of Larina and Karina, and whilst the flames of the fire danced up the chimney, and threw their warm joyous gleams over the assembled company. It pleased Harald infinitely to have Susanna for his auditor, to hear her exclamation of childish terror and astonishment, or also her hearty laughter, or to see her tears over his now merry and now sorrowful tales.

How deeply was Susanna's heart touched by the relation of Mari-Stein, whose path over the mountain on the edge of the abyss of Rjukanforse, which in these days the traveller treads with dread, was discovered by a young girl guided by the courage of love. It was by this path that the beautiful Mary of Vestfjordal went with light and firm foot to meet the friend of her childhood and her beloved Ejstein Halfvordsen. But the avarice of her father separated them, and Mary's tears and prayers obliged Ejstein to fly, in order to escape the schemes of a treacherous rival against his life. Years passed on, and Mary remained stedfast in her faith. Her father died. Ejstein had, by his bravery and his magnanimity, made his former enemy his friend, and the lovers were now about to meet after a long separation, never again to be divided. Ejstein hastened by the shorter road of the Mari-Stein to meet his beloved. Long had she awaited him. She saw him coming, and his name escaped her with a cry of joy. He saw her—stretched forth his arms, as his whole soul, eagerly towards her, and he forgot—that he had no pinions. He fell, and the Rjukan swallowed him in its foaming depths. For many years after this there wandered daily upon Mari-Stein, a pale figure, whose beautiful features spoke of silent insanity, and stood bent down over the stream, and seemed to talk with some one down in its depths. With melancholy joy in her countenance returned she ever from her wandering, and said to her people in the cottage, "I have spoken with him, and he besought me to come to him every day, and to tell him how I love. It would be wrong to refuse him this; he is so good and loves me so truly."

Thus went she, even when the wind blew her silver hair around her wrinkled cheeks; thus she went until a merciful voice called the weary wanderer to ascend the path of heaven to rest and joy, in the arms of the beloved.

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* Several districts, wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah, are said to be buried under the gigantic pall, and it is related that people have heard the cock crow below the snow covering. If the sun appears above the Fond, it is believed that swarms of innumerable birds of all colours, white, black, green, yellow, and red, are seen flying up and down over the snowy sea. It was thought in early times, that these were the souls of the wicked inhabitants of the valley which swarmed about here in the shapes of birds.—FAYE.

Less mournful, but not the less interesting for Susanna, was the old legend of Halgrim.

Stormannadauen (the Black Death) had raged through Norway, and cut off more than two-thirds of its population, and desolated whole extents of country and large populous districts. In Uldvig's Valley, in Hardanger, a young peasant of the name of Halgrim alone, of all the people who had died there, remained alive. He raised himself from the sick bed on which he lay surrounded by the dead, and went out in order to seek for living people.

It was spring, and the larks sang loud in the blue clear air; the birch-wood clothed itself in tender green; the stream, with its melting snow-drifts, wound down the mountains singing on its way; but no plough furrowed the loosened earth, and from the heights was heard no wood-horn calling the cattle at feeding time. All was still and dead in the habitations of men. Halgrim went from valley to valley, from cottage to cottage; everywhere death stared him in the face, and he recognised the corpses of early friends and acquaintance. Upon this, he began to believe that he was alone in the world, and despair seized on his soul, and he determined also to die. But as he was just about to throw himself down from a rock, his faithful dog sprang up to him, caressed him, and lamented in the expressive language of anguish. Halgrim bethought himself, and stepped back from the brink of the abyss; he embraced his dog; his tears flowed, and despair withdrew from his softened heart. He began his wandering anew. Thoughts of love led him towards the parish of Graven, where he had first seen and won the love of Hildegunda.

It was evening, and the sun was setting as Halgrim descended into the valley, which was as still and dead as those through which he had wandered. Dark stood the fir-trees in the black shadow of the rocky wall, and silently rolled on the river between the desolate banks. On the opposite side of the river a little wooded promontory shot out into the blue water, and upon the light green tops of the birch-trees played the last rays of the sun.

Suddenly it seemed to Halgrim as if a light smoke rose up from among the trees. But he trusted not his eyes; he stared upon it breathlessly. He waited, however, hardly a second, when he saw a blue column curling slowly upwards in the peaceful evening air. With a cry of joy Halgrim darted forwards, waded through the stream, and soon stood on its opposite shore. Barking and whining his dog ran onwards to the cottage whence the smoke ascended. Upon its hearth clearly burned the fire, and a young maiden stepped forward to the door—one cry of inexpressible joy, and Halgrim and Heldegunda lay in each other's arms! Hildegunda was also the only living person in her valley after the terrible visit of the Black Death.

On the following day, after mutual agreement, they went to church, and as there was no priest to marry them and nobody to witness the plighting of their faith, they stepped alone together to God's altar, and extended to each other a hand, whilst Halgrim said with a solemn voice, 'In the name of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!"

And God blessed the faith plighted in His name. From this happy pair descended generations who peopled anew this region, and the names of Halgrim and Hildegunda are to this day in use among its inhabitants.

Through Harald also was Susanna made acquainted with the legends of the kings of Norway; with the deeds of Olaf Haraldsen, the blood-baptizer; with those of the noble Olof Tryggveson; and with admiration heard she of king Sverre, with the little body and the large truly royal soul. It flattered also somewhat her womanly vanity to hear of women as extraordinary in the old history of Norway; as for example, the proud peasant's daughter, Gyda, who gave occasion to the hero-deeds of Harald Haarfager, who first made Norway into a kingdom; and although the action of Gunild, the king's mother, awakened her abhorrence, yet it gave her pleasure to see how a woman, by the supremacy of her mind, governed seven kings and directed their actions.

Darker pictures were presented by the citizen wars, which hurried "blood-storm upon blood-storm" through the land, and in which it at length "bled liberty to death."

Now the wild strawberry blooms in the ruins of former strongholds, and upon blood-drenched fields grow golden forests,

As the scar groweth o'er the healed wound.—*Tegnér.*

A milder generation lived in the place of the "Bloody Axe,"* and looked serenely and hopefully towards the future, whilst in their peaceful, beautiful valleys, they listened willingly to the memories of the old times.

Upon the hill-tops stands the ancient stone,
Where legend hovers like a singing lark,
With morning brightness on its downy breast.
VELHAVEN.

One subject of conversation and of dispute also between Harald and Susanna, was their pale lady. As soon as the discourse turned to her, Harald assumed a very grave demeanour, and replied only to Susanna's earnest inquiries of what he knew about her, "she must have been very unfortunate!" If, however, Susanna began to assail him with questions about this misfortune, in what it consisted, whether one could not help her in some way or other—Susanna would have gone up and down the world for this purpose—then began Harald to tell a story.

Tales of women, powerful and distinguished in their valleys, are not rare in Norway. The story of the lady in Hallingdal, called the Shrieking Lady, is well known, who was so magnificent that she was drawn by elks; one hears of the rich Lady Belju, also of Hallingdal, who built Naes church, and by means of fire and butter split the Beja rock, so that a road was carried over it, which road is called to this day, the Butter Rock. One hears tell of the Ladies of Solberg and Sköndal, of their great quarrel about a pig, and of the false oath which one of them swore in the lawsuit which thence ensued; and to every one of these ladies belongs the story, that the preacher did not dare to have the church bells rung until the great lady had arrived there.

They tell farther the history of the wife of the knight Knut Eldhjerna, who, from grief for the criminal lives of her seven sons, retired from the world, and lived as a hermit in a lonesome dale, where, by fasting and alms, she endeavoured to atone for the misdeeds of her children. Yes, indeed, there are many histories of this kind. But as concerns the history which Harald related to Susanna, of Mrs. Astrid, its like had not yet been heard in the valleys of Norway. There occurred in it so many strange and horrible things, that the credulous Susanna, who during it had become ever paler and paler, might have been petrified with horror if, precisely at the most terrible part of the catastrophe, the suspicion had not suddenly occurred to her that she was horrifying herself—at a mere fiction! And Harald's countenance, when she expressed her conjectures, made this certainty; and the hearty laughter with which he received her exclamations and reproaches excited her highest indignation, and she rose up and left him with the assurance that she never again would ask him anything, never believe a word that he said.

This lasted till—the next time. Then if Harald promised to tell the truth as regarded their lady—the whole pure truth, then Susanna let herself be befooled, listened, grew pale, wept, till the increasing marvels of the story awoke afresh her suspicion, which she again plainly expressed as before, and again Barbara stood up, scolded, threatened, banged the door after her in anger, and Harald—laughed.

In one point, however, Harald and Susanna always perfectly agreed; and that was in serving their lady with the greatest zeal; and this, without themselves being aware of it, increased their esteem for each other, which, however, by no means prevented their boldly attacking each other, and slandering—he Sweden, she Norway.

Thus, amid perpetual alternations of strife and peace, slid away the autumn months unobserved, with its darkening days and its increasing cold; and the season came, in which important business demanded the time of the ladies, as well in great as in small houses; the time for lights and tarts, dance, play and children's joy, in one word—

CHRISTMAS.

Come hither, little birds, merry of mood,
By barn-door and dwelling-house corn-ears are strewed;
Christmas comes hither,
Then may ye gather
Food from the bread-giving straw, golden hued.
BJERREGAARD.

The sun shall warm and illumine the whole earth, therefore is the earth glad of his coming.—THE KING'S PLAY.

THANKS be to God for the sun! So many friends, so many joys, desert us during our pilgrimage through life; the sun remains true to us, and lights and warms us from the cradle to the grave. This is it which unites the Pagan and the Christian in one common worship, inasmuch as it lifts the hearts of both to the God who has created the sun. The highest festival of the year among the Northern Heathens and Christians occurs also at the season in which the sun, as it were, is born anew to the earth, and his strength is converted from waning to waxing. With the greatest cordiality is this festival celebrated in the Scandinavian countries. Not alone in the houses of the wealthy blaze up fires of joy, and are heard the joyful cries of children; from the humblest cottages also resounds joy; in the prisons it becomes bright, and the poor partake of—plenty. In the country, doors, hearths, and tables stand open to every wanderer. In many parts of Norway the innkeeper demands no payment from the traveller either for board or lodging. This is the time in which the earth seems to feel the truth of the heavenly words—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." And not only human beings,

* Eric, king of Norway, so called because of his cruelty.

but animals also have, their good things at Christmas. All the inhabitants of the farm-yard, all domestic animals, are entertained in the best manner; and the little birds of heaven rejoice too, for at every barn a tall stake raises itself, on the top of which rich sheaves of oats invite them to a magnificent meal; even the poorest day-labourer, if he himself possess no corn, asks and receives from the peasant a bundle of corn, raises it aloft, and makes the birds rejoice beside his empty barn.

Susanna had had much to care for in the Christmas week, and was often up late at night: in part, on account of her own business; in part, on account of some Christmas gifts with which she wished to surprise several persons around her. And this certainly was the cause of her somewhat oversleeping herself on the morning of Christmas-eve. She was awoke by a twittering of birds before her window, and her conscience reproached her with having, amid the business of the foregoing day, quite forgotten the little birds, to which she was accustomed to throw out upon the snow, corn and bread crumbs; and they were now come to remind her of it. Ah! were but all remembrances like to the twittering of birds! With real remorse for her forgetfulness Susanna hastened to dress herself, and to draw aside the window-curtain. And behold! outside, before her window, stood a tall slender fir-tree, in whose green top, cut in the form of a garland, was stuck a great bunch of gold-yellow oats, around which great flocks of sparrows and bulfinches swarmed, picking and chirping. Susanna blushed, and thought 'Harald!' The people in the house answered with smiles to Susanna's questions, the Steward had indeed planted the tree. The Steward however himself appeared as if he were quite a stranger to the whole affair, betrayed astonishment at the tree with the sheaf of oats, and could not conceive how it had come there.

"It must," said he, "have shot forth of itself during the night;" and this could only be proved from the wonderful strength of the excellent Norwegian earth—every morsel of which is pulverized primary rock. Such a soil only can bring forth such a miraculous growth.

In the forenoon, Harald went with Susanna into the farm-yard, where she with her own hands divided oats among the cows; bread among the sheep; and among the little poultry corn in abundant measure. In the community of hens was there with this a great difference of character observable. Some snatched greedily, whilst they drove the others away by force; others, on the contrary, kept at a modest distance, and picked up well pleased the corn which good fortune had bestowed upon them; others again, seemed to enjoy for others more than for themselves. Of this noble nature was one young cock in particular, with a high comb, and a rich cape of changeful gold-coloured feathers, and of a peculiarly proud and lofty bearing; he gave up his portion to the hens, so that he had scarcely a single grain for himself; regarding, however, the while, with a noble chanticleer-demeanour, the crowd which pecked and cackled at his feet. On account of this beautiful behaviour, he was called the Knight, by Susanna, which name he always preserved after that time. Among the geese, she perceived with vexation that the grey one was still more oppressed and pecked at by his white tyrant than ever. Harald proposed to kill the grey one; but Susanna declared warmly, that if either of the rivals were sacrificed it must be the white one.

In a house where there are no children, where neither family nor friends assemble, where the mistress sits with her trouble in darkness, there can Christmas bring no great joy. But Susanna had made preparations to diffuse pleasure, and the thoughts of it had through the whole week, amid her manifold occupations, illumined her heart; and besides, she was of that kind that her life would have been dark had it not been that the prospect of always making somebody happy had glimmered like a star over her path. Larina, Karina, and Petro tasted on this day of the fruits of Susanna's night-watching; and when it was evening, and Susanna had arranged the Christmas-table in the hall, and had seen it adorned with lut-fish,* and roast meat, and sweet groats, cakes and butter, tarts and apples, and lighted with four candles; when the farm-people assembled round the table with eyes that flashed with delight and appetite; when the oldest among them struck up a hymn of thanksgiving, and all the rest joined in with folded hands and solemn voices—then seemed it to Susanna as if she were no longer in a foreign land: and after she had joined in with the hymn of the people, she seated herself at the table as the most joyous, cordial hostess; clinked her glass with those of the men and maid servants; animated even the most colossal passion for eating, and placed the nicest things before the weak and timid.

Mrs. Astrid had told Susanna that she would remain alone in her chamber this evening, and only take a glass of milk. Susanna wished, however, to decoy her into enjoyment by a little surprise; and had laid the following little plot against her peace. At the time when the glass of milk was to be carried in to her, instead of this a very pretty boy, dressed to represent an angel, according to Susanna's idea of one, with a crown of light upon his head, should softly enter her room and beckon her out. So beautiful and bright a messenger the lady would find it impossible to withstand, and he would then conduct her out into the great hall, where, in a grove of fir-trees, a table was covered with the sweetest groats, and the most delicious of tarts, and behind the fir-trees the people of the house were to be assembled, and to strike up a song to a well-known air of the country, in praise of their lady, and full of good wishes for her future life.

Harald, to whom Susanna had imparted her scheme, shook his head over it, at first, doubtfully, but afterwards fell into it, and lent a helping hand to its accomplishment, as well by obtaining the fir-trees as by fitting out the angel. Susanna was quite charmed with her beautiful little messenger, and followed silently and softly at his heels, as with some anxiety about his own head and its glittering crown he tripped lightly to Mrs. Astrid's chamber.

Harald softly opened the door for the boy. From thence they saw the lady sitting in an easy chair in her room, her head bowed upon her hands. The lamp upon the table cast a faint light upon her black-appareled figure. The audible movement at the door roused her; she looked up, and stared for some time with a wild glance at the apparition which met her there.

* A kind of codfish, which has been soaked in ley for several weeks, and is a general Christmas dish in Norway and Sweden.

Then she arose hastily, pressed her hands to her breast, uttered a faint cry of horror, and sank lifeless to the floor. Susanna pushed her angel violently aside, and rushed to her mistress, who with indescribable feelings of anguish she raised in her arms and carried to bed. Harald, on the contrary, busied himself with the poor angel, who with his crown had lost his balance, and while the hot tallow ran down over brow and cheeks, broke out into the most deplorable tones of lamentation.

Susanna soon succeeded in recalling her mistress to life; but for a long time her mind seemed to be confused, and she spoke unintelligible, unconnected sentences, of which Susanna only understood the words, 'Apparition—unfortunate child—death!' Susanna concluded therefore that the fabricated angel had frightened her, and exclaimed with tears, "Ah, it was only Hans Guttormson's little fellow that I had dressed up as an angel, in order to give you pleasure!"

Susanna saw now right well how little fortunate had been this thought; but Mrs. Astrid listened with great eagerness to Susanna's explanation respecting the apparition which had shook her so much, and at length her convulsive state passed off in a flood of tears. Susanna beside herself for grief, that instead of joy she had occasioned trouble to her lady, kissed, with tears, her dress, hands, feet, amid heartfelt prayers for forgiveness.

Mrs. Astrid answered mildly, but with excitement. "Thou meant it well, Susanna. Thou couldst not know how thou wouldst grive me. But—think no more about it; never more attempt to give me pleasure. I can never more be joyful, never more happy! There lies a stone upon my breast which never can be raised, until the stone shall be laid on my grave. But go now, Susanna, it is necessary for me to be alone. I shall soon be better."

Susanna prayed that she might bring her a glass of milk, and Mrs. Astrid consented; but when she had brought it in she was obliged again to withdraw, her heart full of anguish. When she came out to Harald she poured out to him all her pain over the unfortunate project, and related to him the deep agitation of mind, and the dark, despairing words of her lady.

At this Harald became pale and thoughtful, and Susanna at that was still more depressed. To be sure she had yet a little mine of pleasures remaining, on whose explosion she had very much pleased herself, but this in the disturbed state of mind produced but little effect. It is true that Harald smiled, and exclaimed, 'The cross!' when a waistcoat made its appearance out of a wheaten loaf; it is true that he thanked Susanna and pressed her hand, but he had evidently so little pleasure in her present, his thoughts were so plainly directed to something else, that now every gleam of pleasure vanished for Susanna from the Christmas joy. When she was alone in her chamber, and saw from her window how a little beam of light proceeded from every cottage in the valley, and she thought how within them were assembled in confidential circles, parents, children, brothers and sisters, and friends, then felt she painfully that she was lonesome in a strange land; and as she remembered how formerly on this evening she made her little Hulda happy, and how fortunate her projects had always been, she took out a handkerchief which had been worn on the neck of the little beloved sister, and covered it with hot tears and kisses. Great part of the night she passed on the threshold of her lady's door, listening full of anguish to the never-ceasing footsteps within. But with the exception of several deep sighs, Susanna heard no expression of pain which might justify her in breaking in upon the solitude of her mistress.

We will now turn ourselves to a somewhat more lively picture.

There exists in Norway a pleasant custom, which is called Tura-jul, or Christmas-turns. In Christmas week, namely, people go out to visit one another by turns, and then in the hospitable houses is there feasting, sporting, and dancing. That is called "the Christmas-turns."

And the "turns" extended also to the remote-lying, solitary Heimdal. The pastor of the mother parish, the friendly and hospitable pastor, Middelberg, had sent an invitation to friends and acquaintances in the whole neighbourhood, which included also the inhabitants of Semb, to a feast at the parsonage, on the second day of Christmas.

Mrs. Astrid excused herself, but besought Harald and Susanna to drive there. It had frozen a few days before, and had freshly snowed, so that the sledging was excellent, and Harald now again in good-humour seemed disposed to make a little festival of driving Susanna to the parsonage in a small sledge with jingling bells.

Mrs. Astrid had regained her accustomed manner and appearance, and thus Susanna was easy as to all consequences of her unfortunate scheme on Christmas-eve, and could give herself up with a free mind to the agreeable impressions which the winter-drive offered. And these were manifold and rich to a person who was so little used to pleasure of any kind as Susanna, and who, besides this, was of a fresh, open spirit. The air was so clear, the snow was so dazzling, mountain and woods so splendid, the horse so spirited, and Harald drove so indescribably well, the most difficult places being to him mere play-work, that Susanna exclaimed every now and then, "O how beautiful! O how divine!"

With all this, Harald was uncommonly polite and entertaining. Attentive in the extreme that Susanna sate comfortably, was warm about the feet, and so on, laid himself out at the same time to make her acquainted with all the wonders and beauties of the district; besides which he related much that was interesting of the peculiarities of the neighbourhood, of its woods, mountains, and kinds of stones, spoke of the primeval mountains and transition-formations, of that which had existed before the Flood, and of that which had been formed after it, so that Susanna was astonished at his great learning, and a feeling of reverence for him was excited in her mind. It is true that she forgot this for one while, in a quarrel which suddenly arose between them respecting the sun, which according to Harald's assertion, must appear brighter in Norway than in Sweden, which Susanna contended against most vehemently, and assured him of exactly the opposite; and about the strata of air, of which Susanna asserted that they lay in Norway different to Sweden; upon the whole, however, the drive was harmonious, and in the highest degree advantageous to Harald's appearance. By his driving, his politeness, and his learning, he had attained to something quite grand and extraordinary in Susanna's eyes.

When, after a drive of about six miles, they

approached the parsonage-house, they saw from all sides the little sledges issuing from the passes of the valleys, and then hastening forward in the same direction as themselves across the fields of snow. Steaming breath came from the nostrils of the snorting horses, and merrily jingled the bells in the clear air. Susanna was enraptured.

No less was she enraptured by the cordiality with which she saw herself received at the parsonage—she, a foreign serving-maiden—by foreign, wealthy, and respectable people. Susanna was, besides this, very curious to see how things looked, and how they went on, in a respectable parsonage in Norway; and it was, therefore, very agreeable to her, when the kind Madame Middelberg invited her to see the house, and allowed her to be conducted by her eldest daughter, Thea Middelberg, everywhere, from the cellar even to the garret. Susanna, after this, felt great esteem for the arrangements in the parsonage-house; thought that she could learn various things from it; other things, however, she thought would have been better according to her Swedish method. Returned to the company, Susanna found much to notice and much to reflect upon. For the rest, she was through the whole of this day in a sort of mental excitement. It seemed to her, as if she saw the picture of comfort and happiness of which she had sometimes dreamed, here realized. It seemed to her that life amid these grand natural scenes and simple manners must be beautiful. The relationship between parents and children, between masters and servants, appeared so cordial, so patriarchal. She heard the servants in the house of the clergyman, call him and his wife, father and mother; she saw the eldest daughter of the house assist in waiting on the guests, and that so joyously and easily, that one saw that she did it from her heart; saw a frank satisfaction upon all faces, a freedom from care, and a simplicity in the behaviour of all; and all this made Susanna feel quite light at heart, whilst it called forth a certain tearful glance in her eye.

"Have you pleasure in flowers?" inquired the friendly Thea Middelberg; and when Susanna declared that she had, she broke off the most beautiful rose which bloomed in the window and gave to her.

But the greatest pleasure to Susanna was in the two youngest children of the house, and she thought that the heartful 'mora mi' (my mother), was the most harmonious sound which she had ever heard. And in that Susanna was right also, for more lovely words than these 'mora mi,' spoken by affectionate childish lips, are not in the earth. The little Mina, a child about Hulda's age, and full of life and animation, was in particular dear to Susanna, who only wished that the little romp would have given to herself a longer rest upon her knee. Susanna herself won quite unwittingly the perfect favour of the hostess, by starting up at table at a critical moment when the dinner was being served, and with a light and firm hand saving the things from danger. After this she continued to give a helpful hand where it was needful. This pleased much, and they noticed the young Swede with ever kinder eyes; she knew it, and thought all the more on those who thought of her.

Towards the end of the substantial and savoury dinner, skal was drunk and songs were sung. Susanna's glass must clink with her neighbours', right and left, straight before her and crosswise, and animated by the general spirit she joined in with the beautiful people's song, 'The old sea-girded Norway,' and seemed to have forgotten all spirit of opposition to Norway and Norwegians. And how heartily did not she unite in the last skäl which was proposed by the host, with beaming and tearful eyes, "To all those who love us!" and she thought on her little Hulda.

But now we must go on to that which made this day a remarkable one for Susanna.

After dinner and coffee were over, the company divided, as is customary in Norway. The ladies remained sitting on the sofa and in armed chairs round about, and talked over the occurrences in the neighbourhood, domestic affairs, and the now-happily concluded Christmas business, and 'yes, indeed!' 'yes, indeed!' was often heard among them.

The young girls grouped themselves together in the window, and there was heard talk of 'dress' and 'ornament,' 'heavens, how pretty!' and jest and small-talk.

In the next room sate the gentlemen together with pipes and politics.

Susanna was near to the open door of this room, and as she felt but little interest in the subjects that were spoken of in her neighbourhood, she could not avoid listening to that which was said by the gentlemen within the room, for she heard how there a coarse voice was abusing Sweden and the Swedes in the most defamatory manner. Susanna's blood boiled, and involuntarily, she clenched her fist.

"O heavens!" sighed she, "that I were but a man!"

The patriotic burgomaster's daughter burned with desire to fall upon those who dared to despise her fatherland. She could not hear this coolly, and almost fearing her own anger she was about to rise and take another place, but she restrained herself, for she heard a grave manly voice raised in defence of that foreign calumniated country. And truly it was refreshing for Susanna to hear Sweden defended with as much intelligence as zeal; truly it was a joy to her to hear the assertions of the coarser voice repelled by the other less noisy, but more powerful voice, and at length to hear it declaim, as master of the field, the following lines, which were addressed to his native land on the occasion of the death of Gustavus Adolphus the Great:

> At once is dimmed thy glory's ray;
> Thy flowery garland fades away,
> Bowed mother! But thy brightness splendid
> Shall never more be ended.
> The grateful world on me her love will cast,
> Who mother of Gustavus wast!*

Yes, truly was all this a feeling of delight for Susanna; but the voice which spoke so beautifully—the voice which defended Sweeden—the voice which called forth the feeling of delight, this voice operated more than all the rest on Susanna, for it was that of Harald. Susanna could not trust her ears, she called her eyes to their assistance, and then as she could no longer doubt that the noble defender of her country was Harald, she was so surprised and so joyful that in the overflowing of her feelings she might almost have done something foolish, had not at that very moment one of the elderly ladies of the party come to her, and led her into a quieter corner of the room, in order to be able there quietly to question her of all that she wished to know. This lady belonged to that class (scat-

* Valpladsen vid Lützen. Af Rein.

tered in every country of the world) which has a resemblance to the parasite growth, inasmuch as it grows and flourishes by the nourishment which it seeks from the plants on which it fixes itself. As this lady wore a brown dress, and had brown ribbons in her cap, we find it very appropriate to call her Madame Brown. Susanna must now give Madame Brown an account of her family, her home, all her connexions, why she was come into Norway, how she liked living there, and so on. In all this Susanna was tolerably openhearted; but when the discourse was turned upon her present situation, and her lady, she became more reserved. On this subject, however, Madame Brown was less disposed to question than to relate herself.

"I knew Mrs. Astrid," said she, "in our younger days, very well. She was a very handsome lady, but always rather proud. However, I did not mind that, and we were right good friends. People have told me that I ought to pay a visit to Semb, but—I don't know—I have never seen her since she has been so strange. My God, dear friend, how can you live with her? She must be so horribly gloomy and anxious!"

Susanna replied by a warm burst of praise of her lady, and said, "that she was always sorrowful, and appeared to be unhappy, but that this only bound her to her all the more."

"Unhappy!" began Madame Brown again. "Yes, if that were all—but alas!"

Susanna asked in astonishment what she meant?

Madame Brown answered, "I say and think nothing bad of her, and always defend her, but in any case there is something odd about her. Could you really believe that there are people, wicked enough to speak—to suspect—a murder?"

Susanna could neither think nor speak—she only stared at the speaker.

"Yes, yes," continued Madame Brown, fluently; "so people say! To be sure the Colonel, who was a monster, was most guilty in the affair; but yet, nevertheless, she must have known of it—so people assert. See you—they had a boy with them, the son of her sister. The mother died, after having confided her child to the care of her sister and her brother-in-law. What happens then? One fine day the boy has vanished—never again comes to light—nobody knows what has become of him; but his cloak is found on a rock, by the lake, and drops of blood on the stone under it! The boy had vanished, and his property came in well for his relations, since the Colonel had gambled away every thing which he and his wife possessed. But our Lord, in his justice, smote the Colonel, so that for five years he remained lame and speechless, and his wife never since that time has had one joyful day on earth."

Susanna turned pale with emotion, and as zealously as she had before defended the honour of her native land, now defended she the innocence of her lady. But in this she was interrupted by the friendly hostess, who invited her to join the other young people in games and dancing. But Susanna was so excited by that which she had heard, and longed so much to be at home with her mistress, for whom, now that she had heard her so cruelly maligned, she felt more affection than ever; she prayed to be excused from taking any part in the Christmas games, and announced her intention of driving home. She wished not, however, to take Harald from the company, and intended, unfearingly, to drive home alone. She could drive very well, and should easily find the way.

No sooner, however, did Harald become aware of her intentions than he prepared to accompany her; and it was of no avail that Susanna opposed herself to it. Host and hostess, however, in their cordiality, opposed warmly their guests leaving them so early, and threatened them with 'Aasgaardsreja,' who was accustomed to rage in Christmas time, and would meet them by the way if they persisted in their unwise resolve. Notwithstanding this they did so, and were accompanied by their hosts to the sledge. Susanna thanked them from her moved heart for all their kindness, promised the amiable Thea that they would see one another often, and kissed tenderly the little Mina, who hung upon her neck.

Scarcely was Susanna seated in the sledge, and was amid mountains and woods, than she gave vent to her heart, and related to Harald the story which she had just heard. And her abhorrence had not been less than was now Harald's anger at such a shameful calumniation, and at the person who had exhibited such an evidence of her own dark soul. Yes, he fell into such a rage with old Madame Brown, and made such threatening demonstrations against her well-being, and the horse made such violent springs and plunges, that Susanna endeavoured to lead the conversation to other subjects. She therefore asked Harald what was meant by Aasgaardsreja, and why they had threatened her with it.

Harald on this returned to his customary temper, and assured her that this was by no means to be jested with. "The Aasgaardsreja," said he, "are the spirits which are not good enough to deserve heaven, and yet not bad enough to be sent to hell; they consist of tipplers, polite deceivers,—in one word, of all those who from one cause or another have given themselves to evil. For punishment, therefore, must they ride about till the end of the world. At the head of the troop rides Guro-Rysse, or Reisa-Rova, who is to be known by her long train. After her follows a long numerous band of both sexes. The horses are coal black, and their eyes flash in the darkness like fire. They are guided by bits of red-hot iron, ride over land and water, and the halloo of the riders, the snorting of the horses, the rattling of the iron bits, occasion a tumult which is heard from far. Whenever they throw a saddle over a house, there must some one die, and wherever they perceive that there will be bloodshed or murder, they enter, and seating themselves on the posts by the door, make a noise and laugh in their sleeve. When one hears the Aasgaardsreja coming, one must throw oneself on the ground and pretend that one sleeps. If one does this not, one is carried away by the troop, and struck down in a fainting-fit in a place far distant from where one was. People often, after this, are low-spirited and melancholy all their days. But the virtuous, who throw themselves down immediately on the approach of the troop, suffer nothing, excepting that every one of the airy company spits upon him in passing; when the troop has passed by, then one spits again, and the affair has then no farther consequence."

Harald added that this troop was commonly out at Christmas, and nothing was more possi-

ble than that they themselves might meet it on this very evening, and in that case Susanna had nothing more to do than to dismount from the sledge, throw herself with her nose on the ground, and bury her face in the snow, till the wild herd were gone over.*

Susanna declared, it is true, that she had not any faith in the story; but Harald said so gravely, that one of these days she would see that the affair was true, and Susanna was naturally so inclined to believe in the marvellous, that she very often, especially in narrow passes of the valleys, directed her glance to the heights, half fearing, half wishing, that the black horses, with the fiery eyes and the red-hot bridlebits, might make their appearance. But she only saw bright stars look down upon her, now and then dimmed by the Northern lights, which waved their shining fleeting veils over the vault of heaven.

Arrived at Semb, she saw the customary faint light in the windows of her lady. Susanna's heart was affected, and with a deep sigh she said, "Ah, how wicked this world is! To lay yet stones upon the burden, and to make misfortune into crime. What, what can we do to shield her from the attacks of malice?"

"Madame Brown shall at least not spread her lies farther," said Harald. "I will drive to her to-morrow morning, compel her to swallow her own words, and terrify her from ever letting them again pass her lips."

"Yes, that is good!" exclaimed Susanna delighted.

"If an accident happens to a child," continued Harald excitedly, "then directly to charge those belonging to it with wilful murder! Can one imagine anything more shameful or more absurd. No, such snakes, at least, shall not hiss about the unhappy lady. And to crush them shall be my business!"

And with this Harald pressed Susanna's hand at parting, and left her.

"And my business," thought Susanna, with tearful eyes, "shall be, to love her and to serve her faithfully. Perhaps when order and comfort are diffused more and more around her, when many pleasures daily surround her, perhaps she may again feel an inclination for life."

QUIET WEEKS.

When clouds hang heavy on the face of earth,
And woods stand leafless in their mourning plight,—
Then gentle sympathy has twofold might,
And kindles on the social winter's hearth
Within our hearts the glow of spring's delight.

VELHAVEN.

HAST thou heard the fall of water-drops in deep caves, where heavily, and perpetually, and gnawingly they eat into the ground on which they fall? Hast thou heard the murmuring of the brook that flows on sportively between green banks, whilst nodding flowers and beaming lights of heaven mirror themselves in its waters! There is a secret twittering and whispering of joy in it. There hast thou pictures of two kinds of still life, which are different the one from the other as hell and heaven. Both of them are lived on earth; both of them, at Semb in Heimdal, were lived through the following months: the first by Mrs. Astrid, the second by Harald and Susanna, only that sometimes the wearing drops were blown aside by a favourable breeze, and sometimes mud of various kinds made turbid the waters of the dancing brook.

January passed away with his growing sunshine and his increasing winter pomp. Waterfalls planted their edges with flowers, palms, grapes, yes, whole fruit-trees, of—ice. The bulfinches, with their red breasts, shone like hopping flames upon the white snow. The winter bloomed in sparkling crystals, which were strewn over wood and earth, in the song of the throstle, in the glittering whiteness of the snow-fields. Timber was felled in the woods, and songs from Tegner's Frithof resounded thereto. People drove in sledges through the valleys, and on snow-skates over the mountains. There was fresh life everywhere.

The contest at Semb, about Sweden and Norway, had ceased ever since Christmas. It is true that Harald attempted various attacks upon Swedish iron, the Swedish words, and so on, but Susanna seemed not rightly to believe in their seriousness, and would not on that account take up the strife; and his last attempt on the Swedish wind fell so feebly, that Harald determined to let the subject rest, and to look about for some other matter of contention wherewith to keep himself warm during the winter.

February and March came on. This is the severest time of a northern winter. In January, it is young, but it becomes now old and grey and heavy, especially in cottages, where there is no great provision for the family. The autumn provision, as well in the house as in the yard, is nearly consumed. It is hard for hungry children to trail home wood from the forests, which is to boil for them in their kettle only thin water-gruel, and not always that.

April came. It is called the spring month, and the larks sing in the woods. But in the deep valley often prevails then the greatest anxiety and want. Often then scatters the needy peasant ashes and sand upon the snow which covers his acres, that it may melt all the sooner, and thus he may be able to plough up his land between the snow walls which surround it. Susanna during this month became well known in the cottages of the valley, and her warm heart found rich material for sympathy and help.

Harald thought this too good an opportunity to be lost for infusing into Susanna a horror of himself and his character, and shewed himself cold and immovable to her description of the wants which she had witnessed, and had a proud ability to say 'no' to all her proposals for their assistance. He spoke much of severity and of wholesome lectures, and so on; and Susanna was not slow in calling him the most cruel of men, another tyrant 'Christjern,' a regular misanthrope; 'wolves and bears had more heart than he had. Never again would she ask him for anything; one might just as well talk to a stock or a stone!' And Susanna set off to weep bitter tears. But when she afterwards

* The rushing noise and tumult in the air which attend violent storms, especially in mountain countries, have probably given occasion to the legend of the Aasgaardsreja. There is no doubt of its having its origin in heathen times, but it may also have reference to the procession towards Aasgaard of the heroes who have fallen in battle, or to the aerial journey of the Nornor and Valkyrior. The legend has taken its present form under Christianity, in which the old divinities have been transformed in popular belief into evil powers and servants of the devil.—FAYE.

found that much want was silently assisted from the hand of the misanthrope; when she found that in various instances her suggestions were adopted; then, indeed, she also shed in silence tears of joy, and soon forgot all her plans of hostile reserve. By degrees also Harald forgot his contention in the subject, the interest of which was too good and important; and before they were rightly aware of it, they found themselves both busied for the same purpose in various ways. Susanna had begun by giving away all that she possessed. As she had now no more to give, she began to give ear to Harald's views; that for the poor which surrounded them, generally speaking, direct almsgiving was less needful than a friendly and rational sympathy in their circumstances, a fatherly and motherly guardianship which would sustain the 'broken heart,' and strengthen the weary hands, which were almost sinking, to raise themselves again to labour and to hope. In the class which may be said to labour for their daily bread, there are people who help themselves; others there are whom nobody can help; but the greater number are those who through prudent help in word and deed can attain to—helping themselves, and obtaining comfort and independence.

Harald considered it important to direct the attention of the people to the keeping of cattle, knowing that this was the certain way of this region's advancing itself. And as soon as the snow melted, and the earth was clear, he went out with labourers and servants, and occupied himself busily in carrying away from the meadows the stones with which they, in this country, are so abundantly strewn, and sowed new kinds of grass as a source of more abundant fodder; and Susanna's heart beat for joy as she saw his activity, and how he himself went to work, and animated all by his example and his cheerful spirit. Harald now also often found his favourite dishes for his dinner; nay, Susanna herself began to discover that one and another of them were very savory, and among these may particularly be mentioned groat gruel with little herrings. This course, with which dinners in Norway often begin, is so served, that every guest has a little plate beside him on which lie the little white herrings, and they eat alternately a piece of herring and a spoonful of gruel, which looks very well, and tastes very good.

Harald, towards spring, was very much occupied with work and workpeople, so that he had but little time to devote to Susanna, either for good or bad. But he had discovered that possibly in time he might have a weak chest, and he visited her therefore every morning in the dairy that he might receive a cup of new milk from her hand. For this, he gave her in return fresh spring-flowers, or by way of change, a nettle (which was always thrown violently into a corner), and for the rest attentively remarked the occurrences in the dairy, and Susanna's movements, while she poured the milk out of the pails through a sieve into the pans, and arranged them on their shelves, whereby it happened that he would forget himself in the following monologue—

"See, that one may call a knack! How well she looks at her work, and with that cheerful, friendly face! Everything that she touches is well done;—everything improves and flourishes under her eye. If she only were not so violent and passionate!—but it is not in her heart, there never was a better heart than hers. Men and animals love her, and are well off under her care—Happy the man who—hum!"

Shall we not at the same time cast a glance into Susanna's heart? It is rather curious there. The fact was, that Harald had,—partly by his provocativeness and naughtiness, and partly by his friendship, his story-telling, and his native worth, which Susanna discovered more and more,—so rooted himself into all her thoughts and feelings, that it was impossible for her to displace him from them. In anger, in gratitude, in evil, in good, at all times, must she think of him. Many a night she lay down with the wish never to see him again, but always awoke the next morning with the secret desire to meet with him again. The terms on which she stood with him resembled April weather, which we may be able the clearest to see on—

A MAY DAY.

The first time, yes the first time flings
A glory even on trivial things;
It passes soon, a moment's falling,
Then it is also past recalling.

The grass itself has such a prime;
Man prizes most spring's flowery time,
When first the verdure decks earth's bosom,
And the heart-leaf foretels the blossom.

Thus God lets all, however low,
In 'the first time' a triumph know;
Even in the hour when death impendeth,
And life itself to heaven ascendeth.

HENR WERGELAND.

It was in the beginning of May. A heavy shower of rain had just ceased. The wind sprang up in the south, blew mild and fresh, and chased herds of white clouds over the brightening heaven.

The court at Semb, which had been desolate during the rain, now began to be full of life and movement.

Six ducks paddled up and down with great delight in a puddle of water, bathing and beautifying themselves.

The chanticleer, called the Knight, scratched in the earth, and thereupon began to crow merrily, in order to make it known that he had something nice to invite to, and as two neat grey-speckled hens sprang towards him, he let first one grain of corn and then another fall out of his beak, of which, agreeably to a clever hen-instinct, they availed themselves without ceremony or compliments. How easily the creatures live!

The turkey-cock was in great perplexity, and had a deal of trouble to keep his countenance. His white lady had accepted the invitation of the chanticleer (which she probably thought was general), and sprang forward as fast as she could with her long legs, and stuck her head between the two hens to have a share of their treat. The knightly young chanticleer on this, with some surprise and a certain astonished sound in his throat, drew himself a little proudly back, but for all that was too much of the 'gentleman' to mortify, in the least, the foreign presumptuous beauty. But the grey-speckled hens turned their backs upon her. Her neglected spouse gobbled in full desperation, and swelled himself out, his countenance flaming with anger,

by the side of his black wife, who was silent, and cast deprecating eyes up to heaven.

By the kitchen-wall, the black cat and her kittens romped amid a thousand twists and turns; while above them the mice, in the water-spout, peeped peeringly and curiously forth, drank of the rain-water, snuffed in the fresh air, and afterward crept quietly again under the house tiles.

The flies stretched their legs, and began to walk about in the sunshine.

In the court stood a tall ash, in whose top waved a magpie-nest. A many magpies, candidates for the airy palace, made their appearance there, flew screaming round about, wished to get possession of it, and chased one another away. At length two remained as conquerors of the nest. There laughed they and kissed under the spring-blue heaven, rocked by the south wind. Those that were chased away consoled themselves by fluttering down upon the yard-dog's provision trough, and plucking out of it, whilst the proud Alfiero, sitting outside his kennel, contemplated them in dignified repose.

The starlings struck up their quaver, and sent forth their melodious whistling, whilst they congregated together upon the edge of the roof.

The grapes shook from themselves the rain drops in the wind, and the little stellaria, which is so dear to the singing birds, raised again its head to the sun, and was saluted by the jubilant song of the lark.

The geese waddled gabbling over the grassy fields, biting the young green herbage. In this way, a change was revealed, which had taken place in the company. The bully, the white gander, had by accident become lame, and had with this lost his power and his respect. The grey gander had now an opportunity of exhibiting a beautiful character, a noble disposition; but no! The grey gander shewed nothing of that; but as the white gander had done to him, did he now in return; stretching out his neck against him, and keeping him at a distance with cries and blows; and the geese-madams troubled themselves not about it, and the white gander must now think himself well off to see his rival ruling the assembly, whilst he himself crept behind, hapless and forsaken. Susanna, who saw this, lost now all regard for the grey gander, without having any higher respect for the white one. She found the one no better than the other.

Just now Susanna returned from a visit to a peasant's cottage, where some time ago she had helped the wife to set up a piece of weaving, and now had been assisting her in taking it down, and her countenance beamed with pleasure at the scene which she had witnessed there. The cow had calved there that same morning, and the milk ran in foaming and abundant streams to the unspeakable joy of four small pale boys, who now were divided in their joy over this, and their admiration of the little lively black-and-white spotted calf; which admiration, however, in the mind of the youngest, was mixed with fear. The web also had turned out beyond expectation; Susanna helped the housewife to cut out the piece of cloth in the most advantageous manner, and her cheerful words and cordial sympathy were like the cream to the milk breakfast. It was with this glad impression on her soul, that Susanna entered the court at Semb, and was saluted by Alfiero and all the poultry with great joy. In the mean time she heard the cries and lamentations of birds, and this led her to the orchard. Here she saw a pair of starlings, which with anxiety and screams were flying about the lowest branches of an oak. In the grass below, something black was hopping about, and Susanna saw that it was a young starling, which had ventured itself too early out of the nest, and had fallen down. It now raised its weak cries to its parents, which, as it appeared, sought by their fluttering to keep at a respectful distance a grey cat, whose greedy eyes gleamed forth from under a hawthorn-bush. Susanna drove away the cat, and took up and warmed the little bird in her breast. But this did not at all pacify the starling papa and mamma; their uneasiness seemed rather to increase. Susanna would gladly from her heart have allayed it, but when she looked up and saw the starling nest high up in the oak trunk, many ells above her head, she was quite in despair. With that the noon-day bell rang, Alfiero howled to it in his tragical manner, and Harald, at the head of his workpeople, returned from the field. Susanna hastened to ask counsel from him, and shewed him the young one. "Give it here," said Harald, "I will twist its neck, and so we can have a nice little roast for dinner."

"No! can you be so cruel?" replied Susanna.

Harald laughed without answering, looked up to the oak to see where the starling nest was, and swung himself with great agility up the tree. Standing now upon the lowest boughs, he bent himself down to Susanna, and said, "Give it here to me, I will manage it!" And Susanna now gave him the bird without any further remark. Lightly and nimbly sprang Harald now from bough to bough, holding the bird in his left hand, and accompanied by the crying starling-parents, who flew terrified around his head. It was certainly a surprise to them when the young one was placed uninjured in the nest, but it was no longer so for Susanna; and as Harald, glowing and warm, sprang down from the tree, he was received by Susanna's most friendly glances and cordial thanks.

At this moment came several travelling tradespeople with their packs into the court, and were observed by Harald, who said that he had some little purchases to make, and besought Susanna's advice. Susanna was a woman, and women give advice willingly. Always good of course.

After some time Harald had made various purchases, and had always asked counsel of Susanna, who thereby felt herself somewhat flattered, but could not help thinking the while of Harald "yet he must be a regular egotist. He always thinks about himself, and always buys for himself, and never anything for his sister, of whom he, however, talks so much, and seems to love so well! But—the Norwegian men, they love themselves most!"

And this time it did not seem to be without reason that Susanna thought so, for it was terrible how thoughtful Harald was for himself, and what a deal he needed for this self.

This piece of damask he would have for his

table; this muslin for his curtains, these pocket-handkerchiefs for his nose, and so on.

Susanna could not avoid saying, on purpose to try him, when they came to a handsome piece for a dress—

"How pretty that is! Certainly that would become your sister very nicely!"

"What? my sister!" returned Harald. "No! it is best that she clothe herself. This is exactly the thing that I want for my sofa. One is always nearest to oneself! One must care a little for oneself."

"Then care you for yourself! I have no time!" said Susanna, quite excited, as she turned her back upon him and his wares, and went.

SPRING FEELINGS.

Heaven has strewn thoughts o'er the sweet vernal dale,
These on the hearts of the flowers bestowing,
Therefore, when open the chalices glowing,
Whispers each petal a secret tale. VELHAVEN.

MAY strides on, and June approaches. From their nests in the airy, leaf-garlanded grottoes, which mother nature has prepared for them in the lofty oaks and ashes, the starlings send their deep, lively whistlings, their love-breathing trills. Song and fragrances fill the woods of Norway. Rustic maidens wander with their herds and flocks up to the Säter dales, singing joyously:

To draw to the Säter is good and blessed.
Come Bøling* mine!
Come cow, come calf, come greatest and least;
To the Queen your steps incline.

The labour of the spring was closed; the harvests ripened beneath the care of heaven. Harald had now more leisure, and much of this he devoted to Susanna. He taught her to know the flowers of the dale, their names and properties; and was as much amused at her mangling of the Latin words, as he was charmed at the quickness with which she comprehended and applied their economical and medicinal uses.

The dale and its beauties became to her continually more known and beloved. She went now again in the morning to the spring, where the ladies-mantle and the silver-weed grew so luxuriantly, and let the feathery creatures bathe and rejoice themselves. On Sunday afternoons, too, she sometimes took a ramble to a grove of oaks and wild rose-bushes, at the foot of the mountain called Krystalberg, which, in the glow of the evening sun, glittered with a wonderful radiance. She was sometimes followed thither by Harald, who related many a strange legend of Huldran, who lived in the mountain; of the dwarfs who shaped the six-sided crystals, called thence dwarf-jewels; of the subterranean world and doings, as these were fashioned in the rich imagination of ancient times, and as they still darkly lived on, in the silent belief of the northern people. Susanna's active mind seized on all this with the intensest interest. She visioned herself in the mountain's beautiful crystal halls; seemed to hear the song of the Neck in the rushing of the river; and tree and blossom grew more beautiful in her eyes, as she imagined elves and spirits speaking out of them.

Out of the prosaic soil of her life and action sprung a flower of poetry, half reality, half legend, which diffused a delightful radiance over her soul.

Susanna was not the only one at Semb on whom this spring operated beneficially. The pale Mrs. Astrid seemed to raise herself out of her gloomy trance, and to imbibe new vigour of life from the fresh vernal air. She went out sometimes when the sun shone warmly, and she was seen sitting long hours on a mossy stone in the wood, at the foot of the Krystalberg. When Susanna observed that she seemed to love this spot, she carried thither silently out of the wood, turfs with the flowering Linnea and the fragrant single-flowered Pyrola, and planted them so that the south wind should bear their delicious aroma to the spot where Mrs. Astrid sate; and Susanna felt a sad pleasure in the thought that these balsamic airs would give to her mistress an evidence of a devotion that did not venture otherwise to show itself. Susanna would have been richly rewarded, could she at this time have seen into her mistress's soul, and also have read a letter which she wrote, and from which we present a a fragment.

TO BISHOP S——.

Love does not grow weary. Thus was I constrained to say to myself to-day as your letter reached me, and penetrated me with the feeling of your goodness, of your heavenly patience! And you do not grow weary of those who almost grow weary of themselves! And always the same spring in your hopes—the same mountain-fast, but beautiful faith. Ah! that I better deserved your friendship! But to-day I have a glad word to say to you, and I will not withhold it from you.

You wish to know how it is with me? Better! For some time I have breathed more lightly. Quiet days have passed over me; mild stars have glanced down upon my head; the waterfall has sung its cradle-song to me by night, till it has lulled me to sleep, and it has become calmer and better with me. The spring exerts its beneficent influence upon me. All rises round me so great, so rich in its life and beauty, I forget myself sometimes in admiration. It is more than thirty years since I lived in the country.

At times, feelings arise in me like vernal gales. I have then experienced a certain consolation in the thought, that throughout my long conflict I have yet striven to do right, to endure to the utmost; that in a world where I have shed so many tears, I have also forborne to shed many. Sometimes, out of the vernally blue heaven, something falls on me like a tender glance, an anticipation. But, perhaps, these brightenings are merely spring flowers, which perish with the spring.

I go sometimes out. I enjoy sitting in the beautiful grove of oaks down in the dale, and there, mild and beneficial feelings pass over me. The breeze bears to me odours ineffably delicious. These odours remind me of the world of beneficent, healing, invigorating powers which shoot forth around me, and manifest themselves so silently, so unpretendingly, merely through their fragrance and their still beauty. I sat there this evening, at the foot of the mountain. The sun was hastening towards his

* Bøling is the collected flock. Queen is the fold for the night.

setting, but gleamed warmly into the grove. Near me grazed some sheep with their tender lambs. They gazed at me with a wondering but unalarmed air; a little bell tinkled clear and softly, as they wandered to and fro on the green sward; it was so calm and still that I heard the small insects which hummed in the grass at my feet, and there passed over me I know not what feeling of satisfaction and pleasure. I enjoyed existence in this hour like the lambs, like the insects—I can then still enjoy! Mild, affluent Nature! on thy heart might yet mine——but there stands the pale, bloody boy, —there stands the murderer, everlastingly between me and peace of mind! If I could sometimes hear your voice, if I could see frequently your clear, solace-inspiring glance, I might perhaps yet teach myself to—look up! But I ask you not to come. Ah! I desire no one to approach me. But be no longer so uneasy concerning me, my friend. I am better. I have about me good people, who make my outward life safe and agreeable. Let your affectionate thoughts, as hitherto, rest upon me; perhaps they will some time force light into my heart!

MAN AND WIFE.

A FRESH STRIFE.

And I will show what a fellow I am!
My master—I am incensed!
SIFUL SIFADDA.

We have said that Harald, just as little as Griselda's blessed husband, appeared to like a life which flowed like oil. Perhaps it seemed to him that his intercourse with Susanna was now assuming this character, and therefore was it perhaps that, as he could no longer excite her abhorrence as a misanthropist, one fine day he undertook to irritate her as a woman-tyrant.

"I am expecting my sister here one of these days," said he one evening in a disrespectful tone to Susanna; "I have occasion for her, to sew a little for me, and to put my things in order. Alette is a good, clever girl, and I think of keeping her with me till I marry, and can be waited on by my wife."

"Waited on by your wife!" exclaimed Susanna—one may easily conceive in what a tone.

"Yes, certainly The woman is made to be subject to the man; and I do not mean to teach my wife otherwise. I mean to be master in my house, I."

"The Norwegian men must be despots, tyrants, actual Heathens and Turks!" said Susanna.

"Every morning," said Harald, "precisely at six o'clock, my wife shall get up and prepare my coffee."

"But if she will not?"

"Will not? I will teach her to will, I. And if she will not by fair means, then she shall by foul. I tolerate no disobedience, not I; and this I mean to teach in the most serious manner; and if she does not wish to experience this, why then I advise her to rise at six o'clock, boil my coffee, and bring it me up to bed."

"Nay, never did I hear anything like this! You are the sole—God have mercy on the wives of this abominable country!"

"And a good dinner," continued Harald, "shall she set before me every day at noon, or —I shall not be in the best temper! And she must not come with her 'Fattig Leilighed'* more than once a fortnight; and then I demand that it shall be made right savoury."

"If you will have good eating, then you must make good provision for the housekeeping," said Susanna.

"That I shall not trouble myself about; that my wife must care for. She shall provide stores for housekeeping how she can."

"I hope, then," said Susanna, "you will never have a wife, except she be a regular Xantippe."

"For that we know a remedy; and therefore, to begin with, every evening she shall pull off my boots. All that is necessary is, for a man to begin in time to maintain his authority; for the women are by nature excessively fond of ruling."

"And that because the men are tyrants," said Susanna.

"And besides," continued Harald, "so horribly petty-minded."

"Because," retorted Susanna, "the men have engrossed to themselves all matters of importance."

"And are so full of caprice," said Harald.

"Because the men," said Susanna, are so brimful of conceit."

"And so fickle," added Harald.

"Because the men," retorted Susanna, "are not deserving of constancy."

"And so obstinate and violent," continued Harald.

"When the men," said Susanna, "are absurd."

"But I," proceeded Harald very sharply, "do not like an obstinate, passionate, imperious woman. It is in general the men themselves who spoil them; they are too patient, too conceding, too obliging. But in my house it shall be different. I do not intend to spoil my wife. On the contrary, she shall learn to shew herself patient, devoted, and attentive to me; and for this purpose I intend to send for my dear sister. She must not expect that I shall move from the spot for her sake; she must not—"

At this moment a carriage was heard to drive into the court, and stop before the door. Harald looked through the window, made an exclamation of surprise and joy, and darted like an arrow out of the room. Susanna in her turn looked with anxiety through the window, and saw Harald lift a lady from the carriage, whom he then warmly and long folded in his arms, and quitted only to take from her the boxes and packages which she would bring out, and loaded himself with them.

"O indeed!" thought Susanna, "it is thus then that it stands with his tyranny;" and satisfied that it was Harald's sister whom she thus received, she went into the kitchen to make some preparations for supper.

When she returned to the sitting-room, she found the brother and sister there. With beaming eyes Harald presented to Susanna—

* 'Fattig Leilighed'—'*poor opportunity*'—is the name given in merriment to the cooking up the remains of the week's provisions, which generally is brought out on a Saturday.

"My sister Alette!" And then he began to dance about with her, laughing and singing. Never had Susanna seen him so thoroughly glad at heart.

At supper Harald had eyes only for his sister, whom he did nothing but wait upon with jest and merriment, now and then playing her, indeed, some joke, for which she scolded him; and this only seemed to enliven him still more. Mrs. Astrid had this evening never quitted her room, and Harald could therefore all the more enjoy himself with Alette. After supper, he took his seat beside her on the sofa, and with her hand in his, he reminded her of their days of childhood, and how little they were then able to endure each other.

"You were then so intolerably provoking," said Alette.

"And you so unbearably genteel and high," said Harald. "Do you remember how we used to wrangle at breakfast? That is, how I did, for you never made much answer, but carried yourself so excessively knowingly and loftily, because you were then a little taller than I."

"And I remember too how you sometimes quitted the field, left the breakfast, and complained to our mother you could not support my genteel airs."

"Yes, if that had but in the end availed me anything. But I was compelled to hear, 'Alette is much more sensible than you. Alette is much more steady than you.' That had a bitter taste with it; but as some amends, I ate up your confectionary."

"Yes, you rogue you, that you did, and then persuaded me into the bargain that a rat had done it."

"Ay, I was a graceless lad, good for nothing, conceited, intolerable!"

"And I a tiresome girl, a little old woman, peevish and sanctified. For every trick you played me I gave you a moral lecture."

"Nay, not one, my sister, but seven, and more than that. That was too strong for anything!" exclaimed Harald, laughing, and kissing Alette's hand.

"But," continued he, "they were necessary and well merited. But I, unworthy one, was rather glad when I escaped from them, and went to the University."

"Nor was I either at all sorry to have my pincushion and things left in peace. But when you came home three years later, then the leaf had turned itself over; then it was otherwise. Then became I truly proud of my brother."

"And I of my sister. Do you know, Alette, I think you must actually break off with Lexow. I really cannot do without you Remain with me, instead of going with him up into the shivering, cold North, which you really never can like."

"You must ask Lexow about that, my brother."

Thus continued the conversation long, and became by degrees more serious and still. The brother and sister seemed to talk of their future, and that is always a solemn matter, but ever and anon burst forth a hearty laughter from the midst of their consultations. It went on to midnight, but neither of them appeared to mark this.

Susanna, during the conversation of the relatives, had retired to the next room, so as to leave them the more freedom. Her bosom was oppressed by unwonted and melancholy feelings. With her brow leaned against the cool window panes, she gazed out into the lovely summer evening, while she listened to the soft and familiar voices within. The twilight cast its soft dusky veil over the dale; and tree and field, hill and plain, heaven and earth, seemed to mingle in confidential silence. In the grass slumbered the flowers, leaning on each other; and from amongst the leaves, which gently waved themselves side by side, Susanna seemed to hear whispered the words, 'Brother! Sister!' With an ineffable yearning opened she her arms as if she would embrace some one—but when they returned again empty to her bosom, tears of anguish rolled over her cheeks, while her lips whispered, 'Little Hulda!'

Little Hulda, all honour to thy affections, to thy radiant locks; but I do not believe that Susanna's tears now flowed alone for thee.

ALETTE.

> I see thine eyes in beauty fling
> Back the tall taper's splendour;
> Yet can still, and clear, and tender,
> Dwell on an angel's wing.—VELHAVEN.

WHEN Susanna the next morning went in to Alette, to inquire how she had slept, and so on, she found Harald already with his sister, and around her were outspread the linen, the neckerchiefs, the pocket-handkerchiefs, the table-cloths, etc., which he told Susanna he had purchased for himself, but which, in reality, were presents for his sister, on the occasion of her approaching marriage. Scarcely had Susanna entered the room, when, to her great amazement, the brother and sister both united in begging her to accept the very handsome dress which she had once proposed that Harald should buy for his sister. She blushed and hesitated, but could not resist the cordiality of Harald, and received the gift with thanks, though glad was she not. Tears were ready to start into her eyes, and she felt herself poor in more than one respect. When Harald immediately after this went out, Alette broke forth into a hearty panegyric upon him, and concluded with these words: "Yes, one may probably three times a day get angry with him before we can rightly get to know him; but this is certain, that if he wishes it, you cannot get clear of him without first loving him." Susanna sat silent; listened to Alette's words; and her heart beat at once with painful and affectionate feelings. The call to breakfast broke off the conversation.

Alette was something more than twenty years of age, and had the beautiful growth, the pure complexion, the fine features, with which mother Nature seems especially to have endowed her daughters of Norway. Something fine and transparent lay in her appearance; and her body seemed merely to be a light garment for the soul, so full of life. Her manner of action and of speaking had something fascinating in them, and betrayed happy endowments of nature and much accomplishment. Betrothed to a wealthy merchant of Nordland, she was to be married in the autumn; but in the meanwhile came to spend some time with her brother, and with some other near relatives in Hallindgal.

Susanna felt herself but little at ease with Alette, beside whose fine, half-ethereal being, she perceived in herself, for the first time, an unpleasant consciousness of being—lumpish.

From the moment of Alette's arrival in Semb, there commenced a change there. Her charming disposition and great talents, made her quickly the centre round which all assembled. Even Mrs. Astrid felt her influence, and remained in the evenings with the rest, and took part in the conversation, which Alette knew how to make interesting. But Mrs. Astrid herself contributed not the less thereto, when she for hours together, as it were, forgot herself in the subjects of the conversation, and then uttered words which gave evidence of a deeply feeling and thinking spirit. Susanna regarded her with joy and admiration. Yet often a painful thought seemed to snatch her away from the genial impression, some dark memory appeared spectre-like to step between her and gladness; the words then died on her pallid lips, the hand was laid on the heart, and she heard and saw no more of what was going on around her, till the interest of the conversation was again able to take hold of her.

There was frequently reading aloud. Alette had a real talent for this, and it was a genuine enjoyment to hear from her lips poems of Velhaven and Vergeland; which two young men, although personal enemies, in this respect have extended to each other a brotherly hand, because they sincerely love their native land, and have exhibited much that is beautiful and ennobling in its literature.

In the mean time, Susanna became continually less at ease in her mind; Harald no longer as before sought her company, and seemed almost to have forgotten her in Alette. In the conversations, at which she was now often present, there was much which touched her feelings, and awoke in her questions and imaginations; but when she attempted to express any of these, when she would take part and would show that she could think and speak, then fell the words so ill, and her thoughts came forth so obscurely, that she herself was compelled to blush for them; especially when on this, Alette would turn her eyes upon her with some astonishment, and Harald cast down his; and she vowed to herself never again to open her mouth on subjects which she did not understand.

But all this sunk deep into her bosom; and in her self-humiliation she lamented bitterly the want of a more careful education, and sighed from the depths of her heart; "Ah! that I did but know a little more! That I did but possess some beautiful talent!"

AN EVENING IN THE SITTING-ROOM.

> And is it once morning, then is it noon day,
> For the light must eternally conquer.
>
> Foss.

It was a lovely summer evening. Through the open windows of the sitting-room streamed in the delicious summer air with the fragrance of the hay, which now lay in swath in the dale. At one table, Susanna prepared the steaming tea, which the Norwegians like almost as much as the English; at another sat Mrs. Astrid with Harald and Alette, occupied with the newly-published, beautiful work, "Snorre Sturleson's Sagas of the Norwegian Kings, translated from the Icelandic of J. Aal." The fourth number of this work lay before Harald open at the section "The Discovery of Vineland." He had just read aloud Mr. Aal's interesting introduction to the Sagas of Erik Rode and Karlefne, and now proceeded to read these two Sagas themselves, which contained the narrative of the *first* discovery of America, and of which we here give a brief compendium.

"At the end of the tenth century, at the period when the Northmen sought with warlike Viking hosts the south, and the Christianity with the Gospel of Peace made its way towards the North, there lived in Iceland a man of consequence, named Herjulf. His son was called Bjarne, and was a courageous young man. His mind was early turned towards travel and adventures. He soon had the command of his own ship, and sailed in it for foreign lands. As he one summer returned to the island of his ancestors, his father had shortly before sailed for Greenland, and had settled himself there. Then also steered Bjarne out to sea, saying, 'He would, after the old custom, take up his winter's board with his father, and would sail for Greenland.'

"After three days' sail, a fierce north wind arose, followed by so thick a fog that Bjarne and his people could no longer tell where they were. This continued many days. After that they began to see the sun again, and could discern the quarters of the heaven. They saw before them land, which was overgrown with wood, and had gentle eminences. Bjarne would not land there, because it could not be Greenland, where he knew that they should find great icebergs. They sailed on with a south-west wind for three days, and got sight of another land, which was mountainous and had lofty icebergs. But Bjarne perceived that neither was this Greenland, and sailed farther, till he at length discovered the land which he sought, and his father's court.

"On a visit to Erik Jarl in Norway, Bjarne related his voyage, and spoke of the strange country which he had seen. But people thought that he had had little curiosity not to have been able to say more about this country, and some blamed him much on this account. Erik Rodes' son Lief, the descendant of a distinguished line, was filled with zeal at Bjarne's relation, to pursue the discovery, and purchased of him a ship, which he manned with five-and-thirty men, and so set out to sea, to discover this new land. They came first to a country full of snow and mountains, which seemed to them to be destitute of all magnificence. They then came in sight of one whose shore was of white sand, and its surface overgrown with woods.* They sailed out farther westward, and arrived at a splendid country, where they found grapes and Indian corn and the noble tree 'Masur'.†

"This country‡ they called 'Vineland,' and built a house, and remained there through the winter, which was so mild that the grass was but little withered. Moreover, the day and night were of more equal length than in Iceland or Greenland. And Lief was a tall and strong

* Probably Newfoundland. † Probably spotted maple.
‡ Upper Canada.

man, of a manly aspect, and at the same time wise and prudent in all matters. After this expedition, he grew both in consideration and wealth, and was universally called 'The Happy.'

"Amongst the voyages to this new country which followed on that of Lief, Karlefne's is the most remarkable. But the new colonists were attacked with heavy sickness; and the peculiar home-sickness of the inhabitants of the North might perhaps, in part, drive them back from the grapes of Vineland to their own snowy home: certain it is, that they retained no permanent settlement in the new country. They were also continually assaulted by the natives, whom their weapons were not powerful enough to restrain.

"In the mean time, several Icelandic annalists have recorded that, in every age, from the time of Lief to that of Columbus, America was visited by the Northmen. Testimonies and memories of these voyages we have now only in these relations, and in the remarkable stone called 'Dighton written Rock,' on the bank of Taunton river in Massachusetts, and whose ruins and hieroglyphics at length, in 1830, copied by learned Americans, corroborate the truth of these relations."

Harald now commented on these figures with great zeal, remarking that, in Norway, similar ones were yet found engraven on the face of rocks, on tombstones, etc. "Do you see, Alette," continued he, eagerly, "this represents a woman and a little child; probably Karlefne's wife, who bore a son during this visit to Vineland. And this must be a bull; and in Karlefne's Saga a bull is mentioned, which terrified the natives by his bellowings; and these figures to the right represent the natives. This must be a shield, and these Runic letters."

"It requires a right good strength of imagination for all this, my brother," here interrupted Alette, smilingly, who was not altogether so patriotic as Harald; "but granted that all this was evidence of the first discovery of America by our ancestors, what then? What good, what advantage has the world derived thence? Is it not rather sorrowful to see that such important discoveries should have been lost, that they could be obliterated as if they had never been, and must be made anew? Had not Columbus, some centuries later, braved both the narrow-mindedness of men and the yet unmeasured tracks of the ocean, it is probable that to-day we should know nothing of America, and of these stones, the traces of our forefathers on this foreign soil."

"But, my dear Alette," exclaimed Harald, in astonishment, "is it not then clear as the sun, that without the Vineland voyages of the Northmen, Columbus could certainly never have fallen upon the idea of seeking a land beyond the great ocean? In the time of Columbus, the Northmen sailed in their Snäckor* about all the coasts of Europe; they made voyages to Spain, and rumours of the Vineland voyages went with them. Besides—and *this* is worthy of notice—Columbus himself visited Iceland a few years prior to his great voyage of discovery; and, as Robertson says, rather to extend his knowledge of sea affairs than to augment his property."

* Snails or Cockles, as they called their light craft.

"But," said Alette, "Washington Irving, in his Columbus, which I have recently perused, speaks indeed of his voyage to Iceland, but denies that he derived thence any clue to his great discovery."

"But that is incredible, impossible, after what we here see and hear? Listen now to what Aal says of the time when Columbus made his sojourn in Iceland: 'In Iceland flourished then the written Sagas, and the various Sagas passed from hand to hand in various copies, serving then, as now, but in a higher degree, to shorten the winter evenings. Our old manuscript Sagas thus certainly kindled a light in his dim conceptions; and this must have so much the more brought him upon the track, as it was nearer to the events themselves, and could in part be orally communicated by those who were the direct lineal descendants of the discoverers.'

"Is not this most natural and essential? Can you doubt any longer, Alette? I pray you convert and improve yourself. Convert yourself from Irving to Aal."

"I am disposed to take Harald's side;" said now Mrs. Astrid, with a lively voice and look. "Great, and for mankind, important discoveries have never occurred without preparatory circumstances, often silently operating through whole centuries, till in a happy moment the spirit of genius and of good fortune has blown up the fire which glowed beneath the ashes, into a clear, and for the world, magnificent flame. Wherever we see a flower we can look down to a stem, to the roots hidden in the earth, and finally look to a seed, which in its dark form contained the yet undeveloped but living plant. And may not every thing in the world be regulated by the same law of development? In the tempestuous voyages of the Northmen through the misty seas, I could see the weather-driven seed, which under the guidance of Providence, from the soil of Vineland, stretched its roots through centuries, till a mighty genius was guided by them to complete the work, and to the Old World to discover the New."

Harald was delighted with this idea, which blew fresh wind into his sails; and thereby enlivened, he gave vent to the admiration of the ancient times of the North, which lived in his bosom. "It belonged," said he, "to those men of few words but of powerful deeds; those men to whom danger was a sport, the storm music, and the swell of the waves a dance: to this race of youths it belonged to discover new worlds without imagining that to be an exploit. Great achievements were their every-day occupation."

Alette shook her beautiful head at this enthusiasm for antiquity. She would not deny these times had a certain greatness, but she could not pronounce them truly great. She spoke of the revenge, the violence, the base cruelties which the past ages of the North openly paid homage to.

"But," continned Harald, "the contempt of pain and death, this noble contempt, so universal amongst the men of that time, deprived cruelty of its sting. Our degenerate race has scarcely a conception of the strength which made the men of past times find a pleasure even in pains, since they spurred their courageous souls to the highest pitch of heroism; since in

such moments they felt themselves able to be more than men. Therefore sung heroes amid the very pains of death. Thus died the Swedish Hjalmar, in the arms of his friend Odd, the Norwegian, while he greeted the eagles which came to drink his blood. Thus died Ragnar Lodbrok, in the den of serpents; and while the snakes hissing, gnawed their way into his heart, he sung his victories, and concluded with the words—

> Gone are the hours of existence!
> Smiling shall I die.

How noble and admirable is this strength, amid torments and death! Could we but thus die!"

"But the rudest savages of America," said Alette, "know and practise this species of heroism; before me floats another ideal, both of life and death. The strong spirit of past ages which you, my brother, so highly prized, could not support old age, the weary days, the silent suffering, the great portion of the lot of man. I will prize the spirit which elevates every condition of humanity; which animates the dying hero to praise, not himself, but God, and die; and which to the lonely one, who wanders through the night of life towards his unnoticed grave, imparts a strength, a peace, and enables him in his darkness to triumph over all the powers of darkness. Ah! I who deeply feel myself to be one of the weak ones in the earth, who possess no single drop of Northern heroic blood; I rejoice that we can live and die in a manner which is noble, which is beautiful, which requires not the Berserker-mood, and of which the strongest spirit need not be ashamed. Do you remember, my brother, 'The old poet,' of Rein? This poem perfectly expresses the tone of mind which I would wish to possess in my last hour."

Harald recollected but faintly 'The old poet,' and both he and Mrs. Astrid begged Alette to make them better acquainted with him. Alette could not remember the whole poem, but gave an account of the most essential of its contents in these words—

"It is spring. The aged poet wanders through wood and mead, in the country where he once sung, where he had once been happy, amongst those whom he had made glad. His voice is now broken; his strength, his fire, are over. Like a shadow of that which once he was, he goes about in the young world still fresh with life. The birds of spring gather around him, welcome him with joy, and implore him to take his harp and sing to it of the new-born year, of the smiling spring. He answers—

> O ye dear little singer quire,
> No more can I strike the harp with fire;
> No more in youth is renewed my spring;
> No more the old poet can gaily sing;
> And yet I am so blest—
> In my heart is heavenly rest.*

"He wanders farther through wood and meadow. The brook murmuring between green banks, whispers to him its joy over its loosed bands, and greets the singer as the messenger of spring and freedom

> Thy harp, my fleet stream fondly haileth—
> It leaps, it exults, it bewaileth;
> Let it sound then—O make no delay!—
> Like me the days hasten away.

"The aged singer replies:

> O spring! which dost leap in thy sheen,
> No more am I what I have been.
> The name of the past I hear alone—
> A feeble echo of days that are flown.
> And yet I am so blest;
> In my heart is heavenly rest.

"He wanders farther. The Dryads surround him in their dance; the Flowers present him garlands, and beg him to sing their festival; the Zephyrs, which were wont to play amid his harp-strings, seek in the bushes, and ask whether he has forgotten them there; caress the old man, and seek again, but in vain. They are about to fly, but he entreats:

> O dear ones, depart not I pray!
> O flowers, spread with beauty my way!
> My harp is broken, but no sigh
> Spring's spirits gay shall cause to fly.
> And I am still so blest;
> In my heart is heavenly rest.

"He wanders farther, and seeks out every beloved nook. The youth of the country assemble, and surround the aged singer—'the friend of youth and gladness.' They entreat him with his music to beautify their festival:

> For spring is dead, with all its pleasure,
> Without the harp and song's glad measure.

"The old man replies:

> Quenched, ye youth, is my fire so wild;
> My evening twilight is cool, but mild;
> And the blissful hours of my youth are brought,
> By your lively songs, into my thought.
> Bewail me not; I am still so blest—
> In my heart lieth heaven's own rest.

"And now he exhorts the songsters of the wood, flowers, youth, every thing that is lovely in nature and in life, to rejoice in its existence, and to praise the Creator. The beauty and joy of all creatures are the garland in his silver hair; and grateful and happy, admiring and singing praises, he sinks softly into the maternal bosom of Nature."

Alette was silent; a tender emotion trembled in her voice as she uttered the last words, and beamed in her charming countenance. The tears of Mrs. Astrid flowed; her hands were convulsively clasped together, whilst she exclaimed, "O thus to feel before one dies! and thus to be permitted to die?" She drew Alette to her with a kind of vehemence, kissed her, and then wept silently, leaning on her shoulder. Harald too was affected; but he appeared to restrain his feelings, and gazed with earnest and tearful eyes on the group before him.

Silently and unobserved stole Susanna out of the room. She felt a sting in her heart; a serpent raged in her bosom. Driven by a nameless agonized disquiet, she hastened forth into the free air, and ascended, almost without being aware of it herself, the steep footpath up the mountain, where many a time, in calmer moments, she had admired the beautiful prospect.

Great and beautiful scenes had, during the foregoing conversation, arisen before her view; she felt herself so little, so poor beside them. Ah! she could not once speak of the great and beautiful, for her tongue was bound. She felt so warmly, and yet could warm no one! The happy Alette won without trouble, perhaps even without much valuing it, a regard, an approval

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* I have not wished to attempt a translation of these verses, convinced that for the Swedish reader it is not necessary; and why unnecessarily brush off the golden dust from the butterfly's wings.—*Fredrika Bremer.*

As, however, the *English reader* may find it *rather* more necessary to give a translation of the Norwegian verses, I have made it, and that as much in the simplicity of the original as I could.—M. H.

which Susanna would have purchased with her life. The Barbra-spirit boiled up in her, and with a reproachful glance to heaven she exclaimed, "Shall I then for my whole life remain nothing but a poor despised maid-servant? !"

The heaven looked down on the young maiden mildly but smilingly; soft rain-drops sprinkled her forehead; and all nature around her stood silent, and, as it were, in sorrow. This sorrowing calm operated on Susanna like the tenderly accusing glance of a good mother. She looked down into her heart, and saw there envy and pride, and she shuddered at herself. She gazed down into the stream which waved beneath her feet, and she thought with longing, "O that one could but plunge down, deep, deep into these waves, and then arise purified—improved!"

But already this wish had operated like a purifying baptism on Susanna's soul; and she felt fresh and light thoughts ascend within her. "A poor maid-servant!" repeated now Sanna; "and why should that be so contemptible a lot? The Highest himself has served on earth; served for all, for the very least; yea, even for me. O!—" and it became continually lighter and warmer in her mind.—"I will be a true maid-servant, and place my honour in it, and desire to be nothing else! Charm I cannot; beauty and genius, and beautiful talents, I have not; but—I can love and I can serve, and that will I do with my whole heart, and with all my strength, and in all humility; and if men despise me, yet God will not forsake the poor and faithful maid-servant!"

When Susanna again cast her tearful eyes on the ground, they fell on a little piece of moss, one of those very least children of nature, which in silence and unheeded pass through the metamorphoses of their quiet life. The little plant stood in fresh green, on its head hung the clear rain-drops, and the sun which now shone through the clouds, glittered in them.

Susanna contemplated the little moss, and it seemed to say to her: 'See thou! though I am so insignificant, yet I enjoy the dew of heaven and the beams of the sun, as fully as the roses and the lilachs of the garden!' Susanna understood the speech of the little plant, and grateful and calmed, she repeated many times to herself, with a species of silent gladness—'a humble, a faithful maid-servant!'

When Susanna came home, she found Mrs. Astrid not well. She had been much excited, and on such occasions an attack of the spasms was always to be apprehended. Susanna begged earnestly, and received the permission to watch by her to-night; at least, till Mrs. Astrid slept. Mrs. Astrid had indeed another maid with her, but she was old and very deaf, and Susanna had no confidence in her.

Mrs. Astrid retired to rest. Susanna seated herself on a stool by the window, silently occupied with her thoughts, and with knitting a stocking. The window had stood open during the day, and a host of flies had entered the room. Mrs. Astrid was much disturbed by them, and complained that they prevented her sleeping. Quietly Susanna laid bare her white shoulders, neck, and arms, and when the flies in swarms darted down upon her, and her mistress now left at peace slept calmly, Susanna sate still, let the flies enjoy themselves, and enjoyed herself thereby more than one can believe.

RETREATING AND ADVANCING.

True delicacy, that most beautiful heart-leaf of humanity, exhibits itself most significantly in little things. Those which we in general call so, are not by any means so little.
—J. C. Lous.

It is with our faults as with horseradish; it is terribly difficult to extirpate it from the earth in which it has once taken root; and nothing is more discouraging to the cultivator who will annihilate this weed from his ground, than to see it, so lately plucked up, shooting forth again freshly to the light from roots which remained buried in the earth. One can get quite out of patience with the weedy soil, and one is, when this soil is one's own dear self, possessed by the most cordial desire to set off far, far from one's self. But how!!!

Susanna was often conscious of this feeling, as she daily laboured to repress the excitements which arose up within her at this time. Still the thoughts and resolutions which awoke within her on the evening just described, had taken hold upon her too strongly for them to be again effaced, and with the motto—'a humble and regular servant-girl,' she struggled boldly through the dangers and the events of the day. Her demeanour was calmer; she quietly withdrew herself from taking part in conversation which went beyond her education; in a friendly spirit, she endeavoured to renounce the attentions and interest of others, and busied herself only in attending to the comforts and pleasures of all, as well as in accomplishing, and when possible, anticipating every wish. And such an activity has, more than people imagine, an influence upon the well-being of every-day life. The affectionate will lends even to dead things soul and life. But heavy to the ministering spirits is this life of labour and care for others, where no sunbeam of love, no cordial acknowledgment, falls upon their laborious day.

In the beginning of August, Harald set off, to return in about fourteen days with Alf Lexow, the betrothed of Alette. During his absence, Alette was to pay a visit to her uncle in Hallingdal; but, according to Mrs. Astrid's wish, she yet spent another week at Semb. During these days, Alette and Susanna became better friends, for Alette was touched involuntarily by Susanna's unwearied and unpretending attentions, and besides this, she found in her such a frank mind and such cordial sympathy, that she could not deny herself the pleasure of communicating much of that which lived in the heart of the happy bride. Happy,—indeed Alette was, for long and warmly had she loved Alf Lexow, and should shortly be united to him for ever; and yet often stole a melancholy expression over her charming face, when the conversation turned to this marriage and to her removal into Nordland. Susanna asked her several times of the cause of this, and as often Alette jestingly evaded the question; but one evening when they had chatted together more friendly than common, Alette said—

"It is a strange feeling to get everything ready for one's own marriage in the belief that one shall not long survive it! This removal to Nordland will be my death, that I know cer-

"And—No, do not look so terrified! It is in no case so dangerous. And thoughts of an early death I have long borne in my mind, and therefore I am accustomed to them."

"Ah!" said Susanna, "those who love and are loved, the happy, should never die! But why this strange foreboding?"

"I do not know myself!" replied Alette, "but it has accompanied me from my earliest youth. My mother was born under the beautiful heaven of Provence, and passed the greater part of her youth in that warm country. The love of my father made her love in our Norway a second country, and here she spent the remainder of her life; she never, however, could rightly bear this cold climate, longed secretly for that warmer land, and died with the longing. To me has she bequeathed this feeling; and although I have never seen those orange groves, that warm blue heaven, of which she so gladly spoke, I drew in from childhood a love to them; I have, besides, inherited my mother's suffering from cold;—my chest is not strong, ah!—the long, dark winters of Nordland; the residence on the sea-shore in a climate which is twice as cold as that to which I have been accustomed, the sea mists and storms—ah! I cannot long withstand them. But, Susanna, you must promise me not to say one word of what I have confided to you, either to Harald or to Lexow!"

"But if they know it," said Susanna, "then you certainly need not go there. Certainly your bridegroom would for your sake seek out a milder country—"

"And not feel at home there, and die of longing for his dear Nordland! No, no, Susanna! I know his love for his native land, and know that this winterly nature which I dread so much, is precisely his life and his health. Alf is a Nordlander in heart and soul, and has, as it were, grown up with the district which his fathers inhabited, and whose advance and prosperity are his favourite scheme, the principal object of his activity. No, no! for my sake he shall not tear himself from his home, his noble efforts. Rather would I, if it must be so, find an early grave in his Nordland!"

Susanna now desired to know, and Alette communicated to her, various particulars of the country which was she thought so terrible, and we will now, with the young friends, cast—

A GLANCE INTO NORDLAND.

All is cold and hard.
BLOM.

The spirit of God yet rests upon Nordland.
Z.

A great part of Norway has, as it were, its face turned away from life. 'The Old Night,' which the ancient world considered to be the original mother of all things, here held the giant child in her dark bosom, and bound it tight in swaddling bands, out of which it could not shape itself to joy and freedom. Neither Nordland nor Finmark see the sun for many months in the year, and the difficulties and dangers of the roads shut them out from intercourse with the southern world. The spirit of the North Pole rests oppressively over this region, and when in still August nights it breathes from hence over southern Norway, then withers the half-ripened harvests of the valleys and the plains, and the icy-grey face of hunger stares stiffly from the northern cliffs upon laborious but unhappy human multitudes. The sea breaks upon this coast against a palisadoed fence of rocks and cliffs, around which swarm flocks of polar birds with cries and screams. Storms alternate with thick mists. The cliffs along this coast have extraordinary shapes; now ascend they upwards like towers, now resemble beasts, now present gigantic and terrific human profiles; and one can easily imagine how the popular belief sees in them monsters and giants turned to stone, and why their ancestors laid their Jotunhem in this desolate wilderness.

And a dark fragment of Paganism still lingers about this region even to this day. It is frozen fast into the people's imagination; it is turned to stone in the horrible shapes of nature, which once gave it life. The light of the Gospel endeavours in vain to dissipate the shadows of a thousand years; the Old Night holds them back. In vain the Holy Cross is raised upon all the cliffs; the belief in magic and magic arts lives still universally among the people. Witches sit, full of malice, in their caves, and blow up storms for the sea-wanderers, so that they must be unfortunate; and the ghost Stallo, a huge man, dressed in black, with a staff in his hand, wanders about in the wilderness, and challenges the solitary traveller to meet him in the contest for life and death.

The Laplander, the nomade of the North, roving free with his reindeer over undivided fields, appears like a romantic feature in this life; but it must be viewed from afar. Near, every trace of beauty vanishes in the fumes of brandy and the smoke of the Lapland hut.

Along the coast, between the cliffs, and the rocks, and the hundreds of islands which surround this strand, live a race of fishermen, who rivalling the sea-mew, skim the sea. Night and day, winter and summer, swarm their boats upon the waves; through the whistling tempest, through the foaming breakers, speed they unterrified with their light sails, that from the depths of the sea they may catch the silvery shoals of herrings, the greatest wealth of the country. Many annually are swallowed up of the deep; but more struggle with the elements, and conquer. Thus amid the daily contest are many powers developed, many a hero-deed achieved,* and people harden themselves against danger and death, and also against the gentler beauty of life.

Yet it is in this severe region that the eider-duck has its home; it is upon these naked cliffs where its nest is built, from feathers plucked from its own breast, that silky soft down which is scattered abroad over the whole world, that people in the North and in the South may lie warm and soft. How many suffering limbs, how many aching heads, have not received comfort from the hard cliffs of Norway.

Upon the boundaries between Nordland and Finmark lies the city of Tromsoe, the now flourishing centre of these provinces. It was here that Alette was to spend her life; it was

* The stormy winter of 1839 abounded in misfortunes to the fishermen of Lofode, but abounded also in the most beautiful instances of heroic courage, where life was ventured, and sometimes lost, in order to save a suffering fellow-creature.

here that affection prepared for her a warm and peaceful nest, like the eider-duck drawing from its own breast, the means of preparing a soft couch in the bosom of the hard rock. And after Alette had described to Susanna what terrified her so much in her northern retreat, she concealed not from her that which reconciled her so forcibly to it; and Susanna comprehended this very well, as Alette read to her the following letter.

Tromsöe, May 28th.

Were you but here, my Alette! I miss you every moment whilst I am arranging my dwelling for your reception, and feel continually the necessity of asking, 'how do you wish it? what think you of it?' Ah, that you were here, my own beloved at this moment! and you would be charmed with this 'ice and bear land,' before which, I know, you secretly shudder. The country around here is not wild and dark; as, for example, at Helgoland. Leafy woods garland the craggy shores of our island, and around them play the waves of the sea in safe bays and creeks. Our well-built little city lies sweetly upon the southern side of the island, only divided from the mainland by a narrow arm of the sea. My house is situated in the street which runs along the large convenient harbour. At this moment above twenty vessels lie at anchor, and the various flags of the different nations wave in the evening wind. There are English, German, and especially Russian, which come to our coast, in order to take our fish, our eider-down, and so on, in exchange for their corn and furs. Besides these, the inhabitants of more southern regions bring hither a vast number of articles of luxury and fashion, which are eagerly purchased by the inhabitants of Kola, and the borders of the White Sea. Long life to Commerce! My soul expands at the sight of its life. What has not commerce done from the beginning of the world for the embellishment of life, for promoting the friendly intercourse of countries and people, for the refinement of manners! It has always given me the most heartfelt delight, that the wisest and most humane of the lawgivers of antiquity—Solon—was a merchant. 'By trade,' says one of his biographers, 'by wisdom and music was his soul fashioned. Long life to commerce! What lives not through it?' What is all fresh life, all movement, in reality, but trade, exchange, gift for gift! In love, in friendship, in the great life of the people, in the quiet family circle, everywhere where I see happiness and prosperity, see I also trade; nay what is the whole earth if not a colony from the mother country of heaven, and whose well-being and happy condition depend upon free export and import! The simile might be still further carried out, yet—thou good Giver above, pardon us that we have ventured upon it!

And you must not fancy, Alette, that the great interest for trade here excludes the nobler and more refined mental culture. Among the thousand people who inhabit the city, one can select out an interesting circle for social intercourse. We also have a theatre, and many pleasures of refined life. I was yesterday at a ball, where they danced through the whole night, till—daylight. The good music, the tasteful dresses and lovely dancing of the ladies; but above all, the tone of social life, the cordial cheerfulness, astonished several foreigners who wei[illegible]ed hersel[illegible] and caused them to inquire whether the[illegible] really here under the seventieth degree of latitude?

But the winter! Methinks I hear you say, 'in summer it may be well enough, but in the long, dark winter.' Well then, my Alette, winter—goes on right excellently when people love one another, when it is warm at home. Do you remember, Alette, last autumn, how we read together at Christiansand, in the Morning Paper, the following paragraph from the Tromsöe News of the fourteenth of October:—

"Already for several days successively have we had snow storms, and at this moment the snow-plough is working to form a road for the church-going people. The grave-like stillness of night and winter spread itself with tempest speed over meadow and valley, and only a few cows wander now like spectres over the snow-covered fields, to pluck their scanty fare from the twigs which are not yet snowed up."

That little winter-piece pleased me, but at the expression, 'the grave-like stillness of night and winter,' you bowed your loving dear face, with closed eyes, to my breast. O my Alette! thus shall you do in future, when dread of darkness and cold seizes upon you; and upon my breast, listening to the beating of my heart and to my love, shall you forget the dark pictures which stand without before your home. Close your eyes; slumber, beloved, whilst I watch over you, and then you will, with brightening eyes and blooming cheeks, look upon the night and winter, and feel that its power is not great. O truly can love, this Geiser of the soul, smelt ice and snow, wherever they may be on earth; truly, wherever its warm springs swell forth, a southern clime can bloom; yes, even at the North Pole itself.

Whilst I write this, I hear music, which makes upon me a cheerful and a melancholy impression at the same time. They are eight Russians, who sing one of their national songs, whilst in the quiet evening they sail down the Tromsöe-sound. They sing a quartet, and [illegible] the most complete purity and melody. They sing in a minor key, but yet not mournfully. They row in the deep shadow of the shore, and at every stroke of the oars the water shines around the boat, and drops, as of fire, fall from the oars. The phenomenon is not uncommon on the Atlantic; and know you not, my Alette, what it is which shines and burns so in the sea? It is love! At certain moments, the consciousness of the sea-insects rises to a high pitch of vividness, and millions of existences invisible to the naked human eye, then celebrate the bliss of their being. In such moments the sea kindles; then every little worm, inspired by love, lights up its tiny lamp. Yet only for a moment burns its flame, then all the quicker to be extinguished. But it dies without pain, dies joyfully. Rich nature! Good Creator!

My heart also burns. I look upon the illuminated element, which may be said to be full of enjoyment; I listen to the melody of the singers, full of joy and pain, and—I stretch forth my arms to you, Alette, my Alette!

"O!" exclaimed Susanna, "how this man loves you, and how you must love him! Certainly you must live long, that you may be happy together!"

"And if not long," said Alette, "yet for a short time; yes, a short time I hope to live and to make him happy, to thank him for all his love. And then—"

Alette stooped down and plucked a beautiful full-blown waterlily which grew in the river, by whose banks they stood; she shewed it to Susanna, whilst she continued with a pensive smlie—

> What more then than this?
> One moment she is
> A friendly ray given,
> From her home's shining heaven:
> Then is she the flame,
> High mid the temple's resounding acclaim—
> One moment like this
> Bears you up through death's sleep into bliss.
> MUNCH.

THE RETURN.

> To meet, to part;
> The welcome, the farewell;
> Behold the sun of life!—BJERREGAARD.

ALETTE set off to fulfil her promise to her uncle in Hallingdal; but in a few weeks she was again at Semb, in company with Harald and Alf Lexow, who had fetched her there. Yet this visit could only last for a short time, for then she had to set out with her bridegroom and her uncle's family on the journey to Trondhjem, where her marriage was to be celebrated at the house of a rich and cordial aunt, who had long been rejoicing in it, and had now for several months been baking and boiling in preparation for it. Harald also was to accompany them on this journey.

Alf Dexow was a man in his best years, with an open and generous manner. His face was small, marked by the small-pox, but otherwise handsome and full of life and benevolence. He was one of those men whose first glance attracts one and inspires confidence. Susanna felt great pleasure on seeing the affectionate, confidential understanding between the betrothed. She herself also was now happier, because Harald now left Alette much with her bridegroom, and sought as before for Susanna's society.

Alette was lively, agreeable, and well-educated; she liked best to hear herself talk. So in reality did Harald; and a better listener than Susanna could nobody have. Contentions occurred no longer; but there was a something in Susanna which attracted Harald to her more than the former passion for strife had ever done. He found Susanna's manners altered for the better; there was in them a something quieter, and, at the same time, gentler than before; whilst she was now always so kind, so attentive, and thought of every thing which could give pleasure to others. He saw, at the same time, with what silent solicitude her thoughts followed Mrs. Astrid, who now, at the approach of autumn—it was then the end of August—appeared to have relapsed into her dark and silent mood, out of which she had been aroused for some time. She now very rarely left her room, except at the hour of dinner

Harald wished that his sister and brother-in-law elect should witness, before their departure from the dale, some of the popular assemblings for games and dancings, and had therefore prepared a rural festival, to which he invited them and Susanna, and to which we also will now betake ourselves.

THE HALLING.

> This peculiar, wild, affecting music, is our national poetry.—HENR WERGELAND.
>
> The violins ringing;
> Not blither the singing
> Of birds in the woods and the meadows.
> Hurrah! hand round the foaming can—
> Akal for the fair maid who dancing began!
> Akal for the Jente mine! And
> Akal for the Jente thine! And
> Akal for the fathers and mothers on benches!
> NORWEGIAN SONG.

ONE lovely afternoon in the early part of September were seen two young festally-attired peasant maidens gaily talking, hastening along the footpath through the little wood in Heimdal towards a green open space surrounded by trees, and where might be seen a crowd of persons of both sexes assembled, all in peasant dresses. Here was the 'Leikevold,' or dancing-ground; and as the young girls approached it, the one said to the other, "It is certain, Susanna, that the dress becomes you excellently! Your lovely bright hair shines more beautifully than ever, plaited with red ribbons. I fancy the costume does not suit me half so well."

"Because you, best Alette, look like a disguised princess, and I in mine like a regular peasant girl."

"Susanna, I perceive that you are a flatterer. Let us now see whether Alf and Harald will recognise the Tellemark 'jente' girls."

They did not long remain in uncertainty on this subject; for scarcely were they come to the dancing-ground, when two peasants in Halling-jackets, and broad girdles round their waists, came dancing towards them, whilst they sang with the others the following peasant-song—

> And I am bachelor, and am not roving;
> And I am son unto Gulleig Bö;
> And wilt thou be to me faithful and loving,
> Then I will choose thee, dear maiden, for me.

Susanna recognised Harald in the young peasant, who thus singing gaily, politely took her hand, and led her along the lively springing-dance, which was danced to singing. Alette danced with her Alf, who bore himself nobly as a Halling-youth.

Never had Susanna looked so well and so happy, but then neither had she ever enjoyed such pleasure. The lovely evening; the tones of the music; the life of the dance; Harald's looks, which expressed in a high degree his satisfaction; the delighted happy faces which she saw around her—never before had she thought life so pleasant. And nearly all seemed to feel so too, and all swung round from the joy of their hearts; silver buckles jingled, and shilling after shilling* danced down into the little gaily painted Hardanger-fiddle, which was played upon with transporting spirit by an old man, of an expressive and energetic exterior.

After the first dance, people rested for a moment. They ate apples, and drank Hardanger-ale out of silver cans. After this there rose an almost universal cry, which challenged Harald and another young man who was renowned for his agility and strength, to dance together a 'los Halling.' They did not require much persuasion, and stepped into the middle of the circle, which enlarged itself, and closed around them.

* About a farthing.

The musician tuned his instrument, and with his head bowed upon his breast, began to play with an expression and a life that might be called inspired. It was one of the wild Maliserknud's most genial compositions. Was it imagined with the army, in the bivouac under the free nightly heaven, or in—'slavery,' amid evil-doers? Nobody knows; but in both situations has it charmed forth tones, like his own restless life, which never will pass from the memory of the people. Now took the Hardanger-fiddle for the first time its right sound.

Universal applause followed the dancing of the young men; but the highest interest was excited by Harald, who, in the dance, awoke actual astonishment.

Perhaps there is no dance which expresses more than the Halling the temper of the people who originated it, which better reflects the life and character of the inhabitants of the North.

It begins, as it were, upon the ground, amid jogging little hops, accompanied by movements of the arms, in which, as it were, a great strength plays negligently. It is somewhat bear-like, indolent, clumsy, half-dreaming. But it wakes, it becomes earnest. Then the dancers rise up and dance, and display themselves in expressions of power, in which strength and dexterity seem to divert themselves by playing with indolence and clumsiness, and to overcome them. The same person who just before seemed fettered to the earth, springs aloft, and throws himself around in the air as though he had wings. Then, after many break-neck movements and evolutions, before which the unaccustomed spectator grows dizzy, the dance suddenly assumes again its first quiet, careless, somewhat heavy character, and closes as it began, sunk upon the earth.

Loud shouts of applause, bestowed especially upon Harald, resounded on all sides as the dance ceased. And now they all set themselves in motion for a great Halling-polska, and every 'Gut' chose himself a 'Jente.' Harald had scarcely refreshed and strengthened himself with a can of ale before he again hastened up to Susanna, and engaged her for the Halling-polska. She had danced it several times in her own country, and joyfully accepted Harald's invitation.

This dance, too, is deeply characteristic. It paints the Northern inhabitant's highest joy in life; it is the Berserker-gladness in the dance. Supported upon the arm of the woman, the man throws himself high in the air; then he catches her in his arms, and swings round with her in wild circles; then they separate; then they unite again, and whirl again round, as it were, with superabundance of life and delight. The measure is determined, bold, and full of life. It is a dance-intoxication, in which people for the moment release themselves from every care, every burden and oppression of existence.

Thus felt also at this time Harald and Susanna. Young, strong, agile, they swung themselves around with certainty and ease, which seemed to make the dance a sport without any effort; and with eyes stedfastly riveted on each other, they had no sense of giddiness. They whirled round, as it were, in a magic circle, to the strange, magical music. The understrings sounded strong and strange. The peculiar enchanted power which lies in the clear deeps of the water, in the mysterious recesses of the mountains, in the shades of dark caves, which the skalds have celebrated under the names of mermaids, mountain-kings, and wood-women, and which drag down the heart so forcibly into unknown, wondrous deeps—this dark song of Nature is heard in the understrings* of the Halling's playful, but yet at the same time, melancholy tones. It deeply seized upon Susanna's soul, and Harald also seemed to experience this enchantment. Leaving the wilder movements of the dance, they moved around ever quieter, arm in arm.

"O, so through life!" whispered Harald's lips, almost involuntarily, as he looked deep into Susanna's beaming, tearful eyes; and, "O, so through life!" was answered in Susanna's heart, but her lips remained closed. At this moment she was seized by a violent trembling, which obliged her to come from dancing, and to sit down, whilst the whole world seemed going round with her. It was not until she had drunk a glass of water, which Harald offered to her, that she was able to reply to his heartfelt and anxious inquiries after her health. Susanna attributed it to the violent dancing, but declared that she felt herself again quite well. At that moment Susanna's eyes encountered those of Alette. She sat at a little distance from them, and observed Harald and Susanna with a grave, and, as it seemed to Susanna, a displeased look. Susanna felt stung at the heart; and when Alette came to her and asked rather coldly, how she found herself, she answered also coldly and shortly.

The sun was going down, and the evening began to be cool. The company was, therefore, invited by Harald to a commodious hut, decorated with foliage and flowers. At Harald's desire, a young girl played now upon the 'langleg,'† and sung thereto with a clear, lively voice the Hallingdal song, 'Gjetter-livet (Shepherd-life), which so naïvely describes the days of a shepherd-girl in the solitary dales with the flocks, which she pastures and tends during the summer, without care, and joyous of mood, although almost separated from her kind;—*almost*, for Havor, the goat-herd, blows his horn on the rocks in the neighbourhood, and ere long sits beside her on the crags—

> The boy with his jew's-harp charms the kine,
> And plays upon the flute so fine,
> And I sing this song of mine.

So approaches the evening, and 'all my darlings,' with 'song and love,' are called by their names:

> Come Laikeros, Gullstjerna fine;
> Come Dokkerose, darling mine;
> Come Bjφlka, Qirtelin!

And cows and sheep come to the well-known

---

* The understrings of the so-called Hardanger-fiddle are four metal strings, which lie under the sounding-board. They are tuned in unison with the upper catgut strings, whereby, as well as by the peculiar form of the violin itself, this gives forth a singular strong, almost melancholy sound.

† The langoleik or langleg is a four-stringed instrument, probably of the same form as the psaltry. The peasant-girls in mountain-districts play gladly upon it, and often with great dexterity. In the so-called 'Elskov's-Song,' from Vestfjordal, it is said—

> Ho som so gjilt kan po Langoleik spelo,
> Svanaug den vena, ska no væra mi!

voice, and assemble at the Säter-hut, lowing and bleating joyfully. Now begins the milking; the goatherd maiden sings—

> When I have milked in these pails of mine,
> I lay me down, and sleep divine,
> Till day upon the cliffs doth shine.

After the song, the dancing began again with new spirit. An iron hook was driven into the beam in the middle of the roof, and the dancer who, during the whirl of the Halling-polska, succeeded in striking it with his heel, so that it was bent, obtained the prize for dancing this evening. Observing the break-neck efforts of the competitors, Susanna seated herself upon a bench. Several large, leafy branches, which were reared between the benches and window, prevented her from seeing two persons who stood in quiet conversation, but she remained sitting, as if enchanted, as she heard the voice of Alette, saying—

"Susanna is, to be sure, an excellent and good girl, and I really like her; but yet, Harald, it would distress me if you seriously were attached to her."

"And why?" asked Harald.

"Because I think that she would not be suitable for your wife. She has an unreasonable and violent temper, and—"

"But that may be changed, Alette. She has already changed very much. Of her violent temper I have no fear—that I should soon remove!"

"Greater wizards than you, my brother, have erred in such a belief. At the same time, she is much too uneducated, too ignorant to be a suitable companion for you through life. And neither would she be suitable for the social circles into which you must sometime come. Best Harald! let me beseech you, do not be overhasty. You have so long thought of taking a journey into foreign countries to improve your knowledge of agriculture. Carry out this plan now, travel and look about you in the world before you fetter yourself for life!"

"I fancy you are right, Alette; and I shall follow your advice, but—"

"Besides," said Alette, interrupting him in her zeal, "it is time enough for you to think of marrying. You are still young; have time to look about you, and choose. You can easily, if you will, in every point of view, form a good connexion. Susanna is poor, and you yourself have not wealth enough entirely to disregard—"

Susanna would hear no more; and, in truth, she had heard enough. Wounded pride and sickness of heart drove the blood to her head and chest, till she felt ready to be choked. She rose hastily, and after she had begged an acquaintance to tell Alette and Harald that a mere headache compelled her to leave the dance, she hurried by the woodpath back to Semb.

The evening was beautiful, but Susanna was blind to all its splendours: she remarked not the twinkling of the bright stars, not how they mirrored themselves in the ladies mantle, which stood full of pure crystal water; she heard not the rushing of the river, nor the song of the pine-thrush; for never before, in her breast, had Barbra and Sanna contended more violently.

"They despise me!" cried the former; "they cast me off, they trample me under their feet. They think me not worthy to be near them; the haughty, heartless people! But have they indeed a right to hold themselves so much above me, because I am not so fine, so learned, as they; because I am —— poor?! No, that have they not, for I can earn my own bread, and go my own way through the world as well as any of them. And if they will be proud, then I can be ten times prouder. I need not to humble myself before them! One is just as good as another!"

"Ah!" now began Sanna, and painful tears began to flow down her cheeks, "one is not just as good as another, and education and training make a great difference between people. It is not pleasant for a man to blush for the ignorance of his wife; neither can one expect that anybody would teach a person of my age; nor can they look into my heart and see how willingly I would learn, and—and Harald, whom I thought wished me well, whom I loved so much, whom I would willingly serve with my whole heart and life—how coldly he spoke of me, who just before so warmly—Harald, why shouldst thou fool my heart so, if thou carest so little for what it feels, what it suffers?"

"But," and here again began Barbra, "thou thinkest merely on thyself; thou art an egotist, like all thy sex. And he seems to be so sure of me! He seems not to ask whether I will; no—only whether he graciously should. Let him try! let him make the attempt? and he shall see that he has deceived himself, the proud gentleman! He shall see that a poor girl, without connexions, without friends, solitary in the wide world, can yet refuse him who thinks that he condescends *so* to her. Be easy, Miss Alette! the poor despised Susanna is too proud to thrust herself into a haughty family; because, in truth, she feels herself too good for that."

But Susanna was very much excited, and very unhappy, as she said this. She had now reached Semb. Lights streamed from the bed room of the Colonel's widow. Susanna looked up to the window, and stood in mute astonishment; for at the window stood the Colonel's widow, but no longer the gloomy, sorrowful lady. With her hands pressed upon her breast, she looked up to the clear stars with an expression of glowing gratitude. There was, however, something wild and overstrained in her appearance, which made Susanna, who was possessed by astonishment and strange feelings, determine to go to her immediately.

On Susanna's entrance into the room Mrs. Astrid turned hastily to her. She held a letter clasped to her breast, and said, with restless delight and a kind of vehemence—

"To Bergen, to Bergen! Susanna, I set off to-morrow morning to Bergen. Get all in readiness for my journey as soon as you can."

Susanna was confounded. "To Bergen!" stammered she inquiringly; "and the road thither is so difficult, so dangerous, at this time ——"

"And if death threatened me upon it, I should yet travel!" said Mrs. Astrid, with impatient energy. "But I desire that no one accompany me. You can stay here at home."

"Lord God!" said Susanna, painfully exci-

ted, "I spoke not for myself. Could I die to save my lady from any danger, any sorrow, heaven knows that I would do it with joy! Let me go with you to Bergen."

"I have been very unhappy, Susanna!" resumed Mrs. Astrid, without remarking her agitated state of mind; "life has been a burthen to me. I have doubted the justice of Providence; doubted whether our destinies were guided by a fatherly hand; but now — now I see — now all may be very different.—But go, Susanna, I must compose myself; and you also seem to need rest. Go, my child."

"Only one prayer," said Susanna — "I may go with you to-morrow morning? Ah! refuse me not, for I shall still go with my lady."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Astrid, almost joyfully, "then it would be no use my saying no."

Susanna seized and kissed her hand, and was ready to weep, from all the pain and love which filled her soul; but her lady withdrew her hand, and again desired her kindly but commandingly to go.

When she was alone, she turned her eyes upon the letter which she held in her hands.

Upon the envelope of the letter stood these words, written by an unsteady hand.

"To my wife, after my death."

The letter was as follows:—

"I feel that a great change is about to take place in me. Probably I may die, or become insane. In the first place, I will thank my wife for her angel-patience with me during my life, and tell her, that it is owing to her conduct that I have at this moment my faith left in virtue and a just Providence. I will now reward her in the only way which is possible to me. Know, then, my wife, that the boy, for whom thou hast loved and deplored — *is not dead!* Let it also lessen the abhorrence of my deed, when I assure thee, that it was solicitude for your well-being which led me in part to it. I was totally ruined — and could not endure the thoughts of seeing thee destitute! For this reason I sent away the boy, and gave it out that he was dead. He has suffered no want, he has——" Here followed several illegible lines, after which might be read: "I am confused, and cannot say that which I would. Speak with the former Sergeant Rönn, now in the Customs at Bergen; he will——"

Here the letter broke off. It was without date, the paper old and yellow. But Mrs. Astrid kissed it with tears of joy and gratitude, whilst she whispered, "O what a recompense! What light! Wonderful, merciful, good Providence!"

AASGAARDSREJA.

Wildly the misty troop the tempest rideth,
The ghost of heroes seek the Northern fjorde;
There goes the iron-boat; the serpent glideth,
The ravens flutter round the lofty board.

Dark, silent shades the high mast are surrounding;
Lightnings are flashing from the weapons bright;
Rise up from ocean-cliffs thou horn resounding,
To-night ride forth the Daughters of the fight!

VELHAVEN.

SUSANNA went into her quiet room, but within her it was not quiet—a hard fight was fought there. It was necessary now to abandon all her own wishes and hopes, for Susanna found now that she almost unconsciously to herself, had cherished such, as regarded her mistress and Harald. She had hoped that through her love she might win his, though her attentions might become necessary to them; and now she saw how infinitely little she was to them. She blushed at her own self-delusion, and reproached herself with having been untrue to her little Hulda; in having attached herself so deeply to strange people, and allowed her favourite scheme to be dimmed by new impressions and views. Susanna punished herself severely for it; calling herself foolish and weak; and determined to fly from Harald, and from the place where he dwelt.

"When I have attended my lady over the dangerous mountains,"—thus thought Susanna, —"when I see her in safety and happy, then I will leave her—her and him, and this country forever. Poor came I hither, poorer shall I go away from it, for I shall leave a part of my heart behind in a foreign land. But a pure conscience shall I take with me to my home. They could not love me; but when I am gone, they will perhaps think with esteem, perhaps with friendship, upon Susanna!"

The silent stars mirrored themselves in Susanna's tears, which flowed abundantly during this quiet discourse with herself, and the tears and the stars calmed her mind, and she felt herself strengthened by the resolution which she had taken.

After this she entirely directed her thoughts upon that which would be necessary for the journey, and passed the remainder of the night partly in these preparations, and partly in setting the domestic affairs in order, that she might with a good conscience leave the house.

In the mean time the journey was not so quickly undertaken as was at first intended, for a safe guide and good safe horses for the journey over the mountains had to be obtained, and this occupied the greater part of the next day. Before the morning of the following day, it was not possible that they could set out. Harald, greatly amazed at this sudden determination, endeavoured to delay the journey, by representations of its difficulties and even dangers during this season, for 'from the beginning of September, they may every day look for falls of snow and stormy tempests in this mountain-region.' But Mrs. Astrid, without further explaining herself, adhered to her resolution, and Harald promised to make all preparations for the journey, so that it might be performed as speedily and as safely as possible. They had the choice between four equally difficult mountain-roads which led from this part of Hallingdal towards the diocese of Bergen; and of these, the shortest was that which went through Hardanger. Mrs. Astrid determined upon this. This, however, would require at least two-days-and-a-half. Harald, who knew the way, and said that in case of need he could serve as guide, made preparations to attend the lady on her adventurous journey. Alette, in the mean time, with her Alf, should in company with her uncle in Hallidgdal and his family, set off on the journey to Tronhjem, where Harald promised afterwards to meet them for Alette's marriage.

Harald wished to inquire from Susanna the cause of this extraordinary journey; but Susanna at this time was not much to be spoken with, she had so much to attend to both within and

out of the house, and she was always surrounded by Larina and Karina, and Petro. And Susanna was glad that her household affairs gave her a good excuse for absenting herself from the company, and even from avoiding intercourse with the world. A certain bitterness both towards him and Alette was rooted into her heart.

Among many noble and valuable qualities, man has that of being able to condemn and sentence himself. And if we are justly displeased with any one, if we are wounded and repelled by word or deed, we should depend upon this quality, and permit it to operate reconcilingly upon our feelings. For while we are embittered by his offence, perhaps he himself may have wept in silence over it, waked in the silent hours of the night unpityingly to punish himself in the severe sanctuary of his conscience; and the nobler the human being, all the greater is his pang, even over failings which before the judgment-seat of the world are very small or no faults at all; nay, he will not at all forgive himself if he cannot make atonement for his faults; and the hope of so doing is, in such painful hours, his only comfort.

Thus even would every bitter feeling have vanished out of Susanna's soul, could she have seen how deeply dissatisfied was Harald at this time with himself,—how warmly he upbraided himself for the words which, during the yesterday's dawn, had passed his lips, without there being any actual seriousness in them; and how displeased he was by the promise which he had given to Alette, and with the resolve he had made, in consequence of her anxieties and advice.

This dissatisfaction was the more increased, when he saw by Susanna's swollen eyelids that she had wept much, and remarked in her manner a certain uneasiness and depression which was so entirely the reverse of her usually fresh and lively deportment. Uneasy and full of foreboding, he questioned himself as to the cause, whilst he followed her with inquiring looks.

At dinner, Mrs. Astrid did not join them at the table, and the others sate there silent and out of spirits, with the exception of Lexow, who in vain endeavoured to enliven the rest with his good-humour.

In the afternoon, whilst they were taking coffee, Susanna slipped silently away, to carry to a sick peasant-woman, before her journey, some medicines, together with some children's clothes. Harald, who had stood for some time observing the barometer, and who seemed to suspect her intention, turned round to her hastily as she went out at the door, and said to her,

"You cannot think of going out now? It is not advisable. In a few minutes we shall probably have a severe storm."

"I am not afraid of it," replied Susanna, going.

"But you do not know *our* storms!" answered Harald. "Lexow, come here! See here:"—and Harald pointed to the barometer, whilst he said half aloud, "the quicksilver has fallen two degrees in half an hour; now it sinks again; now it stands near the earthquake point! we shall have in a moment a true 'Berg-rose,'* here."

Lexow shook his head mournfully, and said, "It is a bad look out for the morrow's journey! But I presume that your storms here are mere child's play, compared with those that we have in certain districts of Nordland!" And Alf went to his Alette, who looked inquiringly and uneasily at him.

Harald hastened after Susanna and found her at the door, just about going out with a bundle under her arm. He placed himself in the way before her, and said to her gravely—

"You cannot go! I assure you that danger is at hand."

"What danger?" asked Susanna, gloomily, and with an obstinate determination to act in opposition to Harald

"Aasgaardsreja," answered Harald, smiling, "and it is nothing to joke about. Soon enough will it come riding here and may take you with it, if you do not stop at home. No! You must not go now!" And he seized her hand in order to lead her into the house.

Susanna, who fancied that he was joking in his customary manner, and who was not at all in a joking humour, released her hand and said, crimsoning and proudly—

"I *shall* go, sir! I shall go, because I will do so; and you have no right to prevent me."

Harald looked at her confounded, but said afterwards, in a tone which much resembled Susanna's—

"If I cannot prevent your going, neither can you prevent my following you!'

"I would rather go alone!" said Susanna, in a tone of defiance, and went.

"I even so!" said Harald, in the same tone, and followed her, yet ever at the distance of from fifteen to twenty paces. As he passed the kitchen door, he went in and said to those whom he found there, "Look to the fire, and extinguish it at the first gale of wind; we shall have a tempest."

At the same moment, Alfiero sprang towards Susanna, howling and leaping up with his paws upon her shoulder, as if he would prevent her from going forward on her way. But repulsed by her, he sprang anxiously sneaking into his kennel, as if seeking there for shelter from danger.

The weather, however, was beautiful; the wind still; the heaven bright; nothing seemed to foretel the approaching tempest, excepting the smoke, which, as it ascended from the cottages in the dale, was immediately depressed, and, whirling round, sunk to the earth.

Susanna went rapidly on her way; hearing all the time Harald's footsteps a little behind her, and yet not venturing to turn round to look at him. As by chance she cast her eyes to heaven, she perceived a little white cloud, which took the phantastical shape of a dragon, and which, with the speed of an arrow, came hastening over the valley. Immediately afterwards was heard a loud noise, which turned Susanna's glance to the heights, where she saw, as it were, a pillar of smoke whirlingly ascend upwards. At the same moment Harald was at her side, and said to her seriously and hastily, "To the ground! throw yourself down on the ground instantly!"

* Rose or Ryse (giant) is the name given in Norway to the strong whirlwinds, which are heard howling among the rocks, and which in certain mountain-districts are so dangerous.

Susanna would have protested; but in the same moment was seized by Harald, lifted from the earth, and in the next moment found herself lying with her face upon the ground. She felt a violent gust of wind; heard near to her a report like that of a pistol-shot, and then a loud cracking and rattling, which was followed by a roar resembling the rolling of successive peals of thunder; and all was again still.

Quite confounded by what had taken place, Susanna raised her head, and looked around her as she slowly raised herself. Over all reigned a dead stillness; not a blade of grass moved But just near to her, two trees had been torn up, and stones had been loosened from the crags and rolled into the dale. Susanna looked around for Harald with uneasiness, but he was nowhere to be found, and she thought upon the story of Aasgaardsreja. In her distress she called upon his name, and had great joy in hearing his voice reply to her.

She perceived him at a little distance from her, slowly raising himself near an angular wall of rock. He was pale, and seemed to feel pain Busied about Susanna's safety, Harald had assumed too late the humble posture into which he had compelled Susanna, and had been caught by the whirlwind, and slung violently against the corner of a rock, whereby he had sustained a severe blow upon the left collar-bone and shoulder. He, however, assured Susanna, who was now anxious about him, that it was of no consequence; it would soon be better, he added jestingly.

"But was I not right in saying that Aasgaardsreja is not to be played with? And we have not yet done with it. In a few moments it will be upon us again; and as soon as we hear it roaring and whistling in the mountains, it is best that we humble ourselves. It may otherwise fare ill with us"

Scarcely had Harald uttered these words before the signals were heard from the mountains, and the tempest arose with the same violence as before, and passed over as quickly too. In a few moments all was again still.

"We have now again a few moments' breathing time," said Harald, rising up, and looking inquiringly around him; "but the best is, that we now endeavour to find a shelter over head, so that we may be defended from the shower of stones. There shoots out a wall of rock. Thither will we hasten before the tempest comes again. If I am not mistaken, other wanderers have thought as we."

And, in truth, two persons had before them sought shelter under the rocky projection, and Harald soon recognised them. The elder of them was the guide whom Harald had sent for to conduct them over the mountain-road—a handsome old man in the Halling costume; the younger was his grandson, a brisk youth of sixteen, who was to accompany him. On their way to Semb, they had been overtaken by the tempest.

It was perhaps welcome to both Harald and Susanna, that in this moment of mutual constraint, they were prevented by the presence of these persons from being alone together. From their place of refuge they had an extensive prospect over the dale, and their attention was directed to that which had occurred there. They saw that the cottages had ceased to smoke; a sign that the people, as is customary in such tempests, had universally extinguished their fires. They saw several horses, which had been out to graze, standing immoveably, with their heads turned in the direction from whence the tempest came; in this manner they divided the wind shocks, and could withstand its force. A little farther off a singular atmospheric scene presented itself. They saw thick masses of clouds from different sides rush across the sky, and stormily tumult backwards and forwards. The singularly-formed masses drew up against each other, and had a regular battle in the air. It continued some time; but at length the columns which had been driven on by the weaker wind withdrew, the conquerors advanced tempestuously onwards, and spread themselves over the whole vault of heaven, which now dark and heavy as lead, sunk down to the earth In the mean time the tempest began somewhat to abate, and after about three hours' continuance, had sufficiently subsided to allow the company under the rock-roof to betake themselves to their homeward way. Susanna longed impatiently to be at home, as well on account of her mistress as of Harald, whose contusion evidently caused him much pain, although he endeavoured to conceal it under a cheerful and talkative manner.

Not without danger, but without any farther injury they arrived at Semb, where every one, in the mean time, had been in the greatest uneasiness on their account. The wind entirely abated towards evening. Harald's shoulder was fomented; he soon declared that he had lost all pain; and although every one urgently discouraged him, yet he resolutely adhered to his determination of accompanying Mrs. Astrid across the mountains.

Poor Susanna was so full of remorse for her wilfulness, which had occasioned Harald's accident, so grateful for his care for her, that every bitter feeling as well towards him as to Alette, had vanished from her heart. She felt now only a deep, almost painful necessity of showing her devotion to them; and to give them some pleasure, she would gladly have given her right hand for that purpose.

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNEY.

Forwards! forwards! fly swift as a hind,
See how it laughs behind Fanarauktind!
HENR WERGELAND.

THE party which next morning set out from Heindal and ascended Usterfjell, did not look in the least gay. They moved along all in a thick mist, which hung over the valley, enveloped all the heights, and concealed every prospect around them. Before them rode the guide, the old trusty Halling peasant, whose strong and tall figure gave an impression of security to those who followed after. Then came Mrs. Astrid; then Susanna; then Harald, who carried his arm in a sling. The train was closed by the young boy, and a peasant, who led two horses with the luggage upon hurdles.

After they had ascended for a considerable time the air became clearer, and the travellers had mounted above the regions of mist; soon saw they the blue colour of the heavens, and the sun greeted them with his beams, and lighted up the wild, singular region which now began

to surround them. This scene operated upon Susanna's young open mind with wonderful power. She felt herself altogether freer and lighter of mood, and, glancing around with bright eyes, she thought that she had left behind her all strife and all pain, and now ascended upwards to a future of light and tranquillity. Now her mistress would indeed be happy; and Susanna would, with liberated heart, and bound no longer by selfish feelings, easily follow the calls of duty and the will of Providence. So felt, so thought she.

The road was untracked, often steep and terrific, but the horses stepped safely over it, and thus in a little time they came to a Säter-hut, which lay upon the shore of Ustevand, one of the inland seas which lie at the foot of Hallingskarve. This Säter lies above the boundary of the birch-tree vegetation, and its environs have the strong features peculiar to the rocky character; but its grass-plots, perpetually watered from the snowy mountains, were yet of a beautiful green, and many-coloured herds of cattle swarmed upon them. Like dazzling silver ribbons shimmered the brooks between the green declivities and the darker cliffs. The sun now shone bright, and they mutually congratulated each other on the cheering prospect of a happy journey. At this Säter the company rested for an hour, and made a hasty breakfast of the simple viands which are peculiar to this region. Before each guest was placed a bowl of 'Lefsetriangle,'* on which was laid a cake of rye-meal, about the size of a plate. Upon the table stood large four-cornered pieces of butter, and a dish of excellent mountain-fish. Cans of Hardanger ale were not wanting; and a young girl, with light plaited hair, light-yellow leather jacket, black thickly plaited petticoat, and a red kerchief tied round her neck, with a face as pretty and innocent as ever an idyl bestowed upon its shepherdess, waited upon the guests, and entertained them with her simple, good-humoured talk.

After breakfast the journey was continued. Upon the heights of Ustefjell they saw two vast mountain stretches, whose wavy backs reared themselves into the regions of perpetual snow. They were Hallingskarv and Halling-Jokul.

Slowly advanced the caravan up the Barfjell. By degrees all trees disappeared; the ground was naked, or only covered by low black bushes; between, lay patches of snow-lichen, which increased in extent the higher they ascended. The prospect around had in it something indescribably cold and terrific. But Susanna felt herself in a peculiar manner enlivened by this wild, and to her new spectacle. To this the old Halling peasant contributed, who, whilst they travelled through this desolate mountain track, related to the party various particulars of the 'subterranean folk' who dwelt there, and whom he described as a spectre herd, with little, ugly, pale, or bluish human shapes, dotted in grey, and with black head-gear. "They often draw," said he, "people down into their subterranean dwellings, and there murder them; and if anybody escape living out of their power, they remain from that time through the whole of their lives, dejected and insane, and have no more pleasure on the earth. Certain people they persecute; but to others they afford protection, and bring to them wealth and good fortune." The Halling peasant was himself perfectly convinced of the actual existence of these beings; he had himself seen in a mountain district a man who hastily sunk into the earth and vanished!

One of his friends had once seen in a wood a whole farm, with house, people, and cattle; but when he reached the place, all these had immediately vanished.

Harald declared that here the imagination had played its pranks well; but the old man endeavoured to strengthen the affair by relating the following piece out of Hans Lanridsen's "Book of the Soul."

"The devil has many companions; such as Elle-women, Elle-men, dwarfs, imps, night-ravens, hob-goblins with red-hot fire-tongs, Varwolves, giants, spectres, which appear to people when they are about to die."

And as Harald smilingly expressed some doubt on the subject, the old man said warmly—

"Why, does it not stand written in the Bible that all knees, as well those that are in heaven and on the earth, and *under* the earth, shall bow at the name of the Lord? And who, indeed, can they be *under* the earth, if not the subterranean? And do you take care," continued he gaily, with an arch look at Susanna, "take care when 'Thusmörkel' (twilight) comes, for then is the time they are about; and they have a particular fancy for young girls, and drag them gladly down to their dwellings. Take care! for if they get you once down into their church—for they have churches too, deep under ground—you will never see the sun and God's clear heaven again as long as ever you live; and it would not be pleasant, that you may believe, to dwell with Thuserne."

Susanna shuddered involuntarily at this jest. She cast a glance upon the wild rock-shapes around her, which the Halling-peasant assured her were all spectres, giants, and giantesses, turned into stone. Harald remarked the impression which all this made on Susanna; but he, who had so often amused himself by exciting her imagination, became now altogether rectifying reason, and let his light shine for Susanna on the darkness of superstition.

Higher yet ascended the travellers, and more desolate became the country. The whole of this mountain region is scatterred over with larger and smaller blocks of stone; and these have assisted people as waymarks through this country, when, without these, people must infallibly lose themselves. Stones have, therefore, been piled upon the large blocks in the direction which the road takes; and if a stone fall down the passer-by considers it as a sacred duty to replace it. "Comfortable waymarks," as Professor Hansten, in his interesting "Mountain Journey," calls these watchers; "for," continues he, "they are upon this journey the only traces of man; and if only once one has failed to see one such stone of indication, the next which one discovers expels the awakened anxiety by the assurance, 'thou art still upon the right way.'"

In dark or foggy weather, however, those friendly watchers are almost useless, and the journey is then in the highest degree dangerous. People become so easily bewildered and frozen in this desert, or they are overwhelmed by the falls of snow. They who perish in this manner are called after death "Drauge," and are supposed to haunt the gloomy mountain passes. The guide pointed out a place near the road where had been found the corpses of two trades-people, who one autumn had been surprised by a snow

* 'Lefse' are thin cakes of dough, which are cut in pieces and baked.

storm upon the mountains and lost their lives. He related this with great indifference, for every year people perish in the mountain regions, and this kind of death is not considered worse than any other. But dreadful thoughts began to rise in Susanna's mind. There was, however, no reason to anticipate misfortune, for the weather was lovely, and the journey, although difficult, went on safely and well. It was continued uninterruptedly till evening. As no Säter could be reached before dark, they were to pass the night in a place called "Monsbuheja," because in its neighbourhood there was grass for the horses. Here our travellers happily arrived shortly before sunset. They found here a cave, half formed by nature, and half by the hands of men, which last had rolled large stones around its entrance. Its walls were covered with moss, and decorated with horns of the reindeer fastened into the crevices of the rock. Soon had Susanna formed here, out of carpet-bags, cloaks, and shawls, a comfortable couch for her wearied lady, who thanked her for it with such a friendly glance as Susanna had never before seen in her eyes.

Harald, in the mean time, with the servants had cared for the horses, and collected fuel for the night. A few hundred paces from the cave, a river flowed between ice-covered banks; on the edge of this river, and on the shores of the snow-brook they found roots of decayed junipers, rock-willows, and moor-weed, which they collected together to a place outside the cave, where they kindled the nocturnal watch-fire.

During this, Susanna ascended a little height near the cave, and saw the sun go down behind Halling-Jokul. Like a red globe of fire, it now stood upon the edge of the immeasurable snow-mountains, and threw splendid many-coloured rays of purple, yellow and blue, upon the clouds of heaven, as well as upon the snow-plains which lay below. It was a magnificent sight.

"Good God! how great, how glorious!" exclaimed Susanna, involuntarily, whilst with her hands pressed upon her breast, she bowed herself as though in adoration before the descending ruler of the day.

"Yes, great and glorious!" answered a gentle echo near; Susanna looked around, and saw Harald standing beside her. There stood they, the two alone, lighted by the descending sun, with the same feelings, the same thoughts, ardent and adoring in the waste, dead solitude. Susanna could not resist the feelings of deep and solemn emotion which filled her heart. She extended her hand to Harald, and her tearful look seemed to say, "Peace! Peace!" Susanna felt this a leave-taking, but a leave-taking in love. In that moment she could have clasped the whole world to her breast. She felt herself raised above all contention, all spite, all littleness. This great spectacle had awakened something great within her, and in her countenance *Sanna* beamed in beautiful and mild illumination.

Harald, on the contrary, seemed to think of no leave-taking; for he held Susanna's hand fast in his, and was about to speak; but she hastily withdrew it, and turning herself from him, said—

"We must now think about supper!"

The fire outside the cave blazed up cheerfully, and in the eastern heaven uprose the moon amid rose-coloured clouds.

Soon was Susanna, lively and cheerful, busied by the fire. From cakes of bouillon and prepared groats which she had brought with her, she prepared an excellent soup, in which pieces of veal were warmed. Whilst this boiled, she distributed bread, cheese, and brandy to the men who accompanied them, and cared with particular kindness for the old guide. Harald allowed her to do all this, without assisting her in the least. He sat upon a stone, at a little distance, supported on his gun, and observed her good and cheerful countenance lighted up by the fire, her lively movements and her dexterity in all which she undertook. He thought upon her warm heart, her ingenuous mind, her activity; he thought upon the evenings of the former winter, or when he read aloud, related stories to her, and how she listened and felt the while. All at once it seemed to him that the ideal of a happy life, which for so many years had floated before him, now was just near to him. It stood there, beside the flames of the nocturnal fire, and was lighted up by them. Alette's warnings flitted from before him like the thence-hastening night-mists, without shape or reality. He saw himself the possessor of an estate which he would ennoble as Oberlin has done the sunken, rocky valley; saw himself surrounded by dependents and neighbours, to whose happiness he really contributed; he saw himself in his home—he contemplated it in the most trying light—the long winter evenings; but it dimmed not thereby. For he saw himself as before, on the winter evenings with Susanna; but yet not as before, for he now sat nearer to her and she was his wife, and he read aloud to her, and enjoyed her lively, warm sympathy; but he rested at intervals his eyes upon her and upon the child, which lay in the cradle at her feet, and Susanna glanced at him as she had just now done upon the rock in the evening sun. The flames which now danced over the snow were the flames of his own hearth, and it was his wife who, happy and hospitable, was busied about them, diffusing comfort and joy around her.

"What is the use of a finer education?" thought he, "it cannot create a heart, a soul, and qualities like this girl's!" He could not turn his eyes from Susanna; every moment she seemed more beautiful to him. The sweet enchantment of love had come over him.

In the mean time the evening meal was ready, and Harald was called to it. What wonder if he, after a fatiguing day's journey, and after the observations which he had just been making, found Susanna's meal beyond all description excellent and savoury?! He missed only Susanna's presence during it, for Susanna was within the cave, and upon her knees before Mrs. Astrid, holding in her hand a bowl of soup, and counting with quiet delight every spoonful which her lady with evident satisfaction conveyed to her lips. "That was the best soup that I ever tasted!" said she when the bowl was emptied; "it is true, Susanna, that you are very clever!" It was the first time that Mrs. Astrid had paid attention to her eating, and the first praise which Susanna had received from her mouth—and no soup, not even nectar, can taste so charming, so animating as the first word of praise from beloved lips!

When Susanna went out of the cave, she was welcomed by Harald's looks; and they spoke a language almost irresistibly enchanting for a heart to which affection was so needful as was Susanna's; and in her excited and grateful spirit she thought that she could be content for all eterni-

ty to be up in these mountains, and wait upon and prepare soup for those beloved beings who here seemed first to have opened their hearts to her.

They now made preparations for the night, which promised to be clear, but cold. The peasants laid themselves around the fire. Mrs. Astrid, anxious on account of Harald's shoulder, prayed him to come into the cave, where it was sheltered from the keen air; but Harald preferred to keep watch on the outside, and sate before the fire wrapped in his cloak. Susanna laid herself softly down at her mistress's feet, which she hoped by this means to keep warm. Strange shapes flitted before her inward sight whilst her eyelids were closed. Shapes of snow and ice came near to her, and seemed to wish to surround her—but suddenly vanished, and were melted before the warm looks of love, and the sun shone forth in glory; and happy, sweet feelings blossomed forth in her soul. Amid such she slept. Then a new image shewed itself. She was again in Heimdal; she stood upon the bank of the river, and looked with fearful wonder on the opposite shore; for there, amid the dark fir-trees, shone forth something white, mist-like, but which became ever plainer; and as it approached the brink of the river, Susanna saw that it was a child, and she knew again her little Hulda. But she was pale as the dead, and tears rolled down her snow-white cheeks, while she stretched forth her little arms to Susanna, and called her name. Susanna was about to throw herself into the waves which separated them, but could not; she felt herself fettered by an invisible power. At this, as she turned round with inexpressible anguish to free herself, she perceived that it was Harald who thus held her; he looked so cold, so severe, and Susanna felt at the same time both love and hatred for him. Again anxiously called the tender child's voice, and Susanna saw her little sister sink upon the stones of the shore, and the white waves beat over her. With a feeling of wild despair Susanna now awoke from sleep, and sprang up. Cold perspiration stood upon her brow, and she looked bewildered around. The cave darkly vaulted itself above her; and the blazing fire outside threw red, confused beams upon its fantastically decorated walls. Susanna went softly out of the cave; she wished to see the heavens, the stars; she must breathe the free, fresh air, to release herself from the terrors of her dream. But no beaming star looked down upon her, for the heavens were covered with a grey roof of cloud, and the pale moonlight which pressed through cast a troubled light over the dead country, and gloomy and hideous shapes. The fire had burnt low, and flickered up, as if sleepily, now and then, with red flames. The peasants slept heavily, lying around it. Susanna saw not Harald at this moment, and she was glad of it. In order to dissipate the painful impression she had experienced, Susanna took a water jug, and went down to the river with it, to fetch water for the morrow's breakfast. On the way thither she saw Harald, who, with his gun on his shoulder, walked backwards and forwards some little distance from the cave. Unobserved by him, she, however, came down to the river, and filled her jug with the snow-mingled water. This little bodily exertion did her good; but the solitary ramble was not much calculated to enliven her spirits. The scene was indiscribably gloomy, and the monotonous murmuring of the snow-brook was accompanied by gusts of wind, which, like giant sighs, went mournfully whistling through the desert. She seated herself for a moment at the foot of a rock. It was midnight, and deep silence reigned over the country. The rocks around her were covered with mourning-lichen, and the pale snow-lichens grew in crevices of the mountains; here and there stuck out from the black earth-rind the bog-lichen, a little pale-yellow sulphur-coloured flower, which the Lapland sagas use in the magic arts, and which here gives the impression of a ghastly smile upon these fields of death. Susanna could not free herself from the remembrance of her dream; and wherever she turned her glance she thought that she saw the image of her little dying sister. Perhaps in this dream she had received a warning, perhaps a foretelling; perhaps she might never leave this desert; perhaps she should die here, and then —— what would become of little Hulda? Would not neglect and want let her sink upon the hard stones of life, and the waves of misery go over her? In the midst of these gloomy thoughts, Susanna was surprised by Harald. He saw that she had been weeping, and asked, with a voice so kind that it went to Susanna's heart—

"Why so dejected? Are you uneasy or displeased? Ah! tell it openly to me as to a friend! I cannot bear to see you thus!"

"I have had a bad dream!" said Susanna, wiping away her tears and standing up, "all is so ghastly, so wild here around us. It makes me think on all the dark and sad things in the world! But it is no use troubling oneself about them," continued she more cheerfully, "it will be all well enough when the day dawns. It is the hour of darkness, the hour in which the under-earth spirits have rule!" And Susanna attempted to smile. "But what is that?" continued she, and her smile changed itself suddenly to an expression of anxiety, which made her involuntarily approach Harald. There was heard in the air a low clattering and whistling, and at the same time a mass resembling a grey cloud came from the north, spreading over the snow-fields and approaching the place where they stood. In the pale moonlight Susanna seemed to see wild shapes with horns and claws, moving themselves in the mass, and the words, 'the under-earth spirits,' were nearly escaping her lips.

"It is a herd of reindeer!" said Harald smiling, who seemed to divine her thoughts, and went a few paces towards the apparition, whilst he mechanically shouldered his gun. But at the same moment the herd took another direction, and fled with wild speed towards the east. The wind rose, and swept with a mournful wail through the ice-desert.

"It is here really fearful!" said Susanna, and shuddered.

"But to-morrow evening," said Harald, cheerfully, "we shall reach Storlie-Sater, which lies below the region of snow, and then we shall find birch-woods, quite green yet, and shall meet with friendly people, and can have there a regularly comfortable inn. The day afterwards we shall again have a heavy piece of road; but on that same day we shall have a view of scenes so magnificent, that you certainly will think little of the trouble, on account of the pleasure you will enjoy, for there the beautiful far exceeds the terrific. That spot between Storlie-Sater and Tverlie, where the wild Leira-river, as if in frenzy, hurls itself down over Högfjell,

and with the speed of lightning and the noise of thunder rushed between and over splintered masses of rock, in part naked, in part clothed in wood, to tumble about with its rival the furious Björöja,—that spot exceeds in wild grandeur anything that man can imagine."

Thus spake Harald, to dissipate Susanna's dejection; but she listened to him half-dreaming, and said as if to herself—

"Would that we were well there, and passed it, and at our destination, and then——"

"And then?" said Harald, taking up the unfinished sentence—"what then?"

"Home with my Hulda again!" said Susanna, deeply sighing.

"What, Susanna? Will you then leave us? Do you really hate Norway?"

"No, no!—a long way from that!—But one cannot serve two masters, that I now feel. Hulda calls me. I shall have no rest till I return to her, and never will I part from her again. I have dreamed of her to-night; and she was so pale, so pale—Ah! But you are pale too, terribly pale!" continued Susanna, as she looked at Harald with astonishment; "you are certainly ill!"

"It is this lovely moonlight and this sweet scenery which gives me this ashy-grey colour," said Harald jokingly, who wished to conceal the true cause of his paleness; which was, that his shoulder began to be acutely painful during the night. And he endeavoured to turn Susanna's attention to another object.

The two had in the mean time reached the cave. Harald revived the smouldering fire with fresh fuel, and Susanna crept softly into the cave, and resumed her former place at the feet of her mistress. But it was not till late that she sunk into an uneasy sleep.

She was awoke by a loud and rushing noise. A pale light came into the cave, and she heard Harald's voice saying aloud outside, "It is time that we are preparing for the journey, that as soon as possible we may get into quarters. We have a laborious day before us."

Susanna looked around her for her lady. She stood quite ready near Susanna, and was regarding her with a gentle, attentive look.

Susanna sprang up, shocked at her own tardiness, and went all the quicker now to make arrangements for breakfast. The bouillon was again had recourse to, the servants were refreshed with salmon, bacon, and curds thawed in snow-water.

A tempest had blown up after midnight, which promised our travellers not at all an agreeable travelling-day. The river and the brooks roared loudly, and raged and thundered amid the rocks around them. In the course of the morning the wind however abated, but Harald cast now and then thoughtful glances upon the grey roof of cloud which grew ever thicker above their heads. Susanna saw him once cast an inquiring glance upon the guide, and he shook his grey head. In the mean time all the men seemed cheerful; and Harald seemed to wish, by his animation, to remove the impression which his continued unusual paleness might occasion.

Through the whole forenoon they continued to ascend higher into the region of winter, and the snow-fields stretched out wider and wider. No one living thing shewed itself in this desert, but they frequently saw traces of rein-deer, and here and there flies lay upon the snow in deep winter-sleep. The wind fortunately subsided more and more, and let its icy breath be felt only in short gusts. But ever and anon were heard peals and roarings, as if of loud thunder. They were the so-called 'Fjellskred;' or falls of great masses of rocks and stones, which separate themselves from the mountains, and plunge down, and which in these mountain-regions commonly occur during and after tempests. The peasants related many histories of houses and people who were crushed under them.

The road became continually more and more difficult. They were often obliged to wade through running rivers, and to pass over snow-bridges, under which the rivers had made themselves a path. Harald, alike bold, as prudent and determined, often averted danger at his own risk, from Mrs. Astrid and Susanna. Neither was he pale any longer. The exertions and fever, which nobody suspected, made his cheeks glow with the finest crimson.

In the afternoon, they had reached the highest point of the rocks. Here were piled up two great heaps of stones, in the neighbourhood of a little sea called Skiftesjö, which is covered with never-melted ice in the hottest summer. Here the brooks begin to run westward, and the way begins from here to descend. The giant shapes of the Vasfjern and Ishaug, together with other lofty snow-mountains, shewed themselves in perspective.

The wind was now almost still; but it began to snow violently, and the cloudy sky sank down, dark and heavy as lead, upon the travellers.

"We must hasten, hasten," said the old Halling peasant, as he looked round with an intelligent glance to the party whom he led, "else we shall be snowed up on the mountains, as it happened to the late Queen Margaret, when—"

He ended not, for his horse stumbled suddenly on a steep descent, and threw him over. The old man's head struck violently against a stone, and he remained lying senseless. It was a full hour before they succeeded in bringing him to consciousness. But the blow had been so severe, and the old man was so confused in his head, that he could no longer serve as guide. They were obliged to place him on the same horse as his grandson rode, and the high-spirited young man took charge of him with the greatest tenderness. Harald rode now at the head of the party, but every moment increased the difficulties of his undertaking, for the snow fell with such terrible rapidity, and the thickness of the air prevented him distinguishing with certainty 'the comfortable way-marks,'—the traveller's only means of safety. They were obliged often to make windings and turnings, to come again upon the right path. Nevertheless they succeeded in reaching Björöi-Säter, an uninhabited säter, but which stands upon the broad and rapid Björöia.

Here they halted to take counsel. The Björöia was now so swollen, and rushed along so violently, that they soon saw the pure impossibility of passing it at this place. The old Halling-peasant advised them to make a circuit to another place, where they might with safety cross the river; this would take them near to the Storlie-Säter, and near to the great waterfall of the same name, the roar of which might be heard at three miles' distance. It is true that they must make a circuit of some miles, but what could they do? Great was the danger of pursuing the journey in this storm, but greater yet to stand still in this desert, where the snow fre-

quently fell to the depth of many yards. The old Hallinger, however, chose this last; for he found himself unable to sit on the horse, and prayed to be left quiet in the hut, with provisions for a few days, in which time he hoped that the snow would cease and begin to thaw. He did not wish that his grandson should remain with him, but he was resolute not to leave his old grandfather, and the rest considered it alike proper and necessary; and the two therefore were hastily supplied with whatever they might require in this winterly solitude. Their horses were supplied with provender, and led likewise into the hut.

Susanna bound up the old man's head with the carefulness of a daughter. It was to her infinitely difficult to leave the old man behind them there. "And if no thaw come?" said she; "if snow and winter still continue, and thou art buried in here and frozen?"

"That has happened before now to many a better fellow than me," said the old man calmly. "One cannot die more than once, and God is also at home in the wilderness. And he who rightly can utter the Lord's Prayer, need not to fear the under-earth spirits. With me, an old man, it may go as it will. My best time is, in any case, past; I am anxious only for the youth. Think on him when thou comest to human beings."

Susanna was affected. She impressed a kiss upon the old man's forehead, and a warm tear fell from her cheek upon his. The old man looked up to her with a cordial, bright-beaming glance; "God's angel guide thee!" cried he after her, as she left the hut to attend the rest.

Again was the little train in motion, and wandered over snow-fields, naked rocks, and half-thawed morasses. The snow reached high up the legs of the horses, and only slowly and almost reluctantly went they forward. It grew darker and darker. No one spoke a word. Thus they went on for an hour's space.

With great uneasiness had Susanna fancied for some time that she observed Harald to reel in his saddle; but she endeavoured to persuade herself that it might be only a delusion, which the unequal paces of the horse occasioned, and by the thick snow-mist through which she saw him. All around her had, in fact, a bewildering appearance, and seemed to her waving and spectral. A dull cry from Mrs. Astrid broke the ghostly silence—was this also a delusion? Harald's horse stood still, and was without its rider. Of a truth, it was only too certain. Harald had, seized by dizziness, fallen down beside his horse. He had borne for long in silence the increasing pain in his shoulder and breast, and endeavoured to conceal from himself, as well as from others, feelings of feverish dizziness which seized his head. Even now, when it threatened to overpower him, he would not allow it to be of any consequence. With the help of the servant, he made several attempts to seat himself again upon his horse, but in vain. He could no longer lift up his fevered head. Lying upon the snow on his knees, and with silent misery, he leaned his burning forehead against a piece of rock.

"Here, then—here shall we die!" said Mrs. Astrid, half aloud to herself, in a gloomy voice; "and this young man must be sacrificed for my sake. My fate is always the same!"

Then followed a moment of fearful silence. Men and animals stood immoveable, and as if turned to stone, while the snow fell over them, and seemed to threaten to bury them. But now a clear, cheerful voice raised itself, and said—

"I see a flat rock yonder, which will shelter us from the snow. We must carry him there!" And Susanna raised up Harald and seized his arm, while the servant went before and made a path through the snow. About forty paces from the place where they stood, a vaulted projecting rock stretched forth, under which they could obtain shelter from the snow, which reared itself in high walls around the open space.

"Support yourself on me; better — better! Fear not; I am strong!" said Susanna, while she, with a soft but vigorous arm, embraced Harold. He allowed himself to be led like a child; although he was not properly conscious, still he felt a certain pleasure in submitting himself to the young girl's guidance, who talked to him with such a mild and courageous voice.

As commodiously as possible was Harald laid under the sheltering rock, and Susanna took off her shawl, which she wore under her fur cloak, and made of it a soft pillow for Harald. "Ah! that is good!" said he softly, and pressed Susanna's hand, as he found himself relieved by this position. Susanna returned now to her mistress.

"Susanna," said she, "I would also gladly get there. It seems safe resting there. But I am so stiff that I can scarcely move myself."

Susanna helped her lady from her horse; and guided and supported by her, Mrs. Astrid reached the sheltering vault. Here, in comparison with that of the open plain, the air was almost of a mild temperature, for the rock walls and the piled-up snow prevented the cold wind from entering. Here Susanna placed softly her lady, who was almost stiffened with cold and fatigue.

Susanna, also, was frozen and weary; but, O what a southern clime of life and warmth cannot love and a strong will call forth in a human being! It was these powers which now impelled the young girl's pulse, and let the blood rush warm from the chambers of her heart to her very finger ends. She rubbed the stiffened limbs of her mistress, she warmed them with kisses and tears, she warmed her with her throbbing breast. She prevailed upon her to drink from a bottle of wine, and prepared also for Harald's parched and thirsty lips a refreshing draught of wine and water. She moistened her handkerchief with snow, and laid it upon his aching brow. Around them both she piled cloaks and articles of clothing, so that both were protected from the cold. Then stood she for a moment silent, with a keen and serious look. She was thinking on what was farther to be done to save these two.

Harald had raised himself on his sound arm, and looked silently down with the pain which a manly nature experiences when it is compelled to renounce one of its noblest impulses—sustaining and helping the weak who are confided to their care. A tear—the first Susanna had ever seen him shed, ran down his cheek.

Mrs. Astrid gazed with a mournful look up to the grave-like vault.

But Susanna's eyes beamed even brighter. "Hark! hark!" said she, and listened.

Mrs. Astrid and Harald fixed upon her inquiring looks.

"I hear a noise," resumed Susanna, "a noise like that of a great waterfall."

"It is the roar of the Storlie-forse!" exclaimed Harald, for a moment animated, "but what good of that?" continued he, and sunk down disheartened; "we are three miles off—and cannot get there!"

"Yes, we can, we will!" said Susanna, with firm resolution. "Courage, courage, my dear lady! Be calm, Mr. Bergman! We will reach it, we will be saved!"

"And how?" said Harald, "the servant is a stupid fellow, he never could find his way."

"But I can find it, be sure of that!" replied Susanna; "and come back hither with people and help; tell me only the signs by which I may know the right way. These, and the roar of Storlie-forse, will guide me."

"It is in vain! You would perish, alone and in the snow-storm!"

"I shall not perish! I am strong! No one shall hinder me. And if you will not tell me the way, I shall, nevertheless, find it out."

When Harald saw her so firmly resolved, and her cheerful and determined tone had inspired him with a degree of confidence, he endeavoured to point out to her the objects by which she must direct herself, and which consisted of rock and crag, which, however, in the snowy night, she probably could no longer distinguish.

With deep attention, Susanna listened, and then said cheerfully, "Now I have it! I shall find the way! God preserve you! I shall soon be back again with help!"

When she came out into the open air, she found the servant seeking his comfort in the brandy bottle, and the horses sunk in a spiritless stupor. She admonished him to take care of these, and charged him earnestly, both with threats and promises of reward, to think about his employers and watch over their safety. She herself gave to her horse fodder and water, patting him the while, and speaking to him kind and encouraging words. After that she mounted to commence her solitary, dangerous journey. But it was only with great difficulty that she could make the horse part from his companions, and when it had gone about twenty paces forward, it stopped, and would return again to its company. This manœuvre it repeated several times; at length it would obey neither blows nor encouragement. Susanna therefore dismounted and let the horse go. A few tears filled her eyes as she saw him thus abandon her, and beseechingly she lifted her hands to Him, who here alone saw the solitary defenceless maiden.

After that she pursued her way on foot.

This indeed was not long, and the length of it was not the difficulty; but he who had seen Susanna making her way through the deep snow, then clambering up rocks, then wandering over morasses, where at every step she feared to sink, would have been filled with amazement at her courage and her strength. But 'God's angel,' whom the old man had prayed might guide her seemed to be with her on the way, for the fall of snow ceased, and ever and anon shot a moonbeam forth, and showed her some of the objects which Harald had described as landmarks. Besides, the din of the Storlie-force grew ever louder and louder, like the trumpet of the resurrection in her ears. A strong resolve to attempt the uttermost, a secret joy in testifying her affection, even though it should be with the sacrifice of her life, gave wings to her feet, and prevented her courage failing for a single minute.

So passed two hours. Susanna now heard the water roaring beneath her feet. She seemed to be on the point of plunging into an abyss; around, all was darkness and snow. She stood still. It was a moment of terrible uncertainty. Then parted the clouds, and the half-moon in full glory beamed forth, just as it was about to sink behind a rock. Susanna now saw the abyss on whose brink she stood; she saw the Storlie-forse spread its white masses of water in the moonlight, saw the Sater-huts there below! . . . .

Beneath the stone vault where Mrs. Astrid and Harald found themselves, prevailed for some time after Susanna's departure, a deep and wild silence. This was at length broken by Mrs. Astrid, who said in a solemn tone—

"I have a request to make of you, Harald!"

"Command me!" answered he. "Might I but be able to fulfil your wish!"

"We seem both," resumed Mrs. Astrid, "now to stand near the grave; but you are younger and stronger than I, you I hope will be rescued. I must confide to you an important commission, and I rely on the honour and the soundness of heart which I have observed in you, that you will conscientiously execute it, in case I myself am not in a condition to do so, and you as I trust, will outlive me!"

Mrs. Astrid had uttered this with a firm voice, but during the following relation she was frequently agitated by contending emotions. She spoke rapidly, and in short, abrupt sentences, as thus—

"I had a sister. How I loved her, I am not able to express. She was as gay and gentle in her mood as I was serious. When I married, she accompanied me to my house. But there was no good luck. The fortune which my sister possessed placed her in a condition to follow her own heart's bias, and she gave her hand to a poor but amiable young man, a Lieutenant Wolf, and lived with him some months of the highest earthly felicity. But brief was the happiness to be. Wolf perished on a sea-voyage, and his inconsolable wife sunk under her sorrow. She died some hours after she had given birth to a son, and after she had laid her tender babe in my arms, and prayed me to become its mother.

"And I became a mother to this child. An own son could not have possibly been dearer to me. I was proud of the handsome, lively child. I saw a beautiful future for him. He should realize the ideal of my youth, he should . . . O! amid my own poor and desolate life I was yet rich in this boy. But the man who had received my hand endured not that my heart should belong to this child. He took a hatred to the poor boy, and my life became more than ever bitter. Once I was obliged to make a journey to visit a sick relative. I wished to take the seven-year-old boy with me, for he had never been separated from me. But my husband would retain him with him, and assumed a tone of tenderness to persuade me. This I could not resist; and spite of the boy's entreaties, and an anxiety which seemed to me ominous—I left my poor child. I persuaded myself that I was acting strongly, and I was really weak. I had promised the child's mother to protect it—I knew that I left it in hard and hostile hands, and yet!—When after a week's absence I returned from my journey, the boy—had vanished. He had gone out one day, it was said, and never came back again. They had sought for him everywhere, and at length had found his little hat upon a rock on the edge of the sea—it was held for certain that he had fallen over it. I found my husband busy in taking possession of my

sister's property, which in case of the boy's death should, according to her will, fall to us. From this moment, my soul was seized with the most horrible suspicions! . . . God be praised that these were false! God forgive me that I ever entertained them! For twenty years have they gnawed at my heart; for twenty years have they hung the weight of lead on the fulfilment of my duties. All my researches were fruitless: no one could be suspected; no one seemed to have acted herein, except a dreadful fate. This was all: he had had permission to go out and play, had left the house alone, and no one had seen him afterwards.

"Twenty years—long, dark years—had passed since this period, and hope had by degrees expired in my heart, the feeble hope, which sometimes revived in it, that I should yet recover my beloved child. After having been many years deprived of both bodily and mental vigour by his paralysis, my husband died. I was free; but wherefore should I live! . . . I had lost my faith in every thing which makes life dear, and I stood alone, on the verge of old age, surrounded by darkness and bitter memories. Thus did I still feel but a few days ago, when I received a writing from the present Commandant of R——. Within lay an unsealed letter, which he said had been found in a drawer into which my husband was wont to throw old letters and papers, of no worth or importance. And this letter . . . Oh! how it would have changed my heart, and my future! This letter was written by my husband, apparently immediately after his severe paralytic stroke, but its words, in an unsteady hand, said, that the lost child still lived, and directed me for further explanation to a certain Sergeant Rönn, in Bergen. Here the letter appeared to have been broken off by a sudden increase of his attack. I was, as it chanced, absent from home on this day. When I returned, I found my husband speechless, and nearly lifeless. Life was indeed restored through active exertions, but consciousness continued dark, and half of the body powerless—thus he lived on for some years. In a moment of clearness which occurred to him shortly before he expired, I am convinced that he desired to unfold to me the condition of the boy, or the existence of the aforesaid letter—but death prevented him . . . How this letter became thrown amongst the old papers I do not understand—perhaps it might be done by my husband's own hand, in that moment of privation of consciousness in which the letter closed—enough, the hand of Providence saved it from destruction, and allowed it to reach me! . . .

"You know now the cause of my hasty journey. And if it should for me terminate here,—if I shall never achieve the highest wish, and the last hope of my life,—if I never may see again my sister's son, and myself deliver into his hands that which has been unjustly withheld from him,—then, listen to my prayer, my solemn injunction! Seek out, as soon as you can, in Bergen, the person whom I have named, and whose address you will further find in the paper. Tell him, that in my last hour I commissioned you to act in my stead; spare no expense which may be necessary — promise, threaten — but search out where my sister's son is to be found! And then—go to him. Bear to him my last affectionate greeting; deliver to him this;—it is my Will, and it will put him in possession of all that I possess, which is properly that of his mother, for my own is nearly consumed. Tell him that care on his account has worn away my life, that—my God! What do you? Why do you thus seize my hand?—you weep!"

"Tell me—" stammered forth Harald, with a voice nearly choked by emotion; "did this child wear on a ribbon round his neck a little cross of iron?—the head of a winged cherub in its centre?"

"From his mother's neck," said Mrs. Astrid, "I transferred it to his!"

"And here——here it yet rests!" exclaimed Harald, as he led Mrs. Astrid's hand to the little cross hanging to his neck. "What recollections awake now! Yes, it must be so! I cannot doubt——you are my childhood's first cherisher, my mother's sister!"

A cry of indescribable emotion interrupted Harald. "Good God!" exclaimed Mrs. Astrid, "you are——"

"Your sister's son, the child that you mourn. At this moment I recognise again myself and you."

"And I—— Your voice, Harald, has often struck me as strangely familiar. At this moment I seem again to hear your father's voice. Ah, speak! speak! for heaven's sake, explain to me——make me certain——you give me then more than life."

"What shall I say?" continued Harald, in the highest excitement and disquiet; "much is obscure to myself—incomprehensible. But your narrative has at this moment called up in me recollections, impressions, which make me certain that I neither deceive you nor myself. At this instant I remember with perfect clearness, how I, as a child, one day ran my little sledge on the hill before the fortress, and how I was there addressed by the, to me, well-known Sergeant Rönn, but whose name till this moment had entirely escaped me, who invited me to ascend his sledge, and take a drive with him. I desired nothing better, and I got in. I remember also now extremely well that my hat blew off, that I wished to fetch it, but was prevented by the Sergeant, who threw a cloak round me, and drove off at full speed. And long did the drive continue—but from this moment my recollection becomes dark, and I look back into a time as into a dark night, which ever and anon is illuminated by lightning. Probably I fell then into the heavy sickness which long afterwards checked my growth. I recollect it as a dream, that I would go home to my mother, but that my cries were hushed by the Sergeant, first with good words and then with menaces. I remember dimly, that I at one time found myself in a foul and wretched house, where hideous men treated me harshly, and I longed to die.—Then comes, like a sunbeam, the impression of another home, of a clear heaven, pure air, green meadows, and of friendly, mild people, who, with infinite tenderness, cherished the sick and weakly child which I then was. This home was Alette's; and her excellent parents, after they had recalled me to life, adopted me as their son. My new relationships became unspeakably dear to me; I was happy; my illness and the long succeeding weakness had almost wholly obliterated the memory of the past. I had forgotten the names of both people and places, yet never did I forget my childhood's earliest, motherly cherisher. Like a lovely and holy image has she followed me through life, although, with the lapse of years, she, as it were, folded herself continually in a thicker veil.

"When I was older, I requested and received from my foster-father an explanation of my reception into his house. I then found that he had one day called on Mr. K—— in Christiansand, and had seen there a most feeble and pale child, who sate in the sunshine on the floor. The child began to weep, but hushed itself in terror when Mr. K—— went up sharply to it, and threatened it with the dark room. Moved by this occurrence, my benefactor inquired to whom the boy belonged, and received for answer that it was a poor child without connexions, and who had been taken in charity and committed to K——'s care. Alette's father resolved at once, cost what it would, to take the child out of this keeping, and offered to take the boy himself, and try what the country air would do for the restoration of his health. It was in this manner that I came into the family which I thence called my own. I could obtain no explanation respecting my parents, nor respecting my peculiar connexion with Mr. K——. K—— died a few weeks after my removal from his house, and his wife either knew or pretended to know nothing whatever about me.

"But my excellent foster-parents never allowed me to feel that I had no real relatives. They made no difference between me and their own child, and Alette became to me the tenderest and best of sisters. Death deprived us of this beloved support; Alette's father has been now dead two years: Alette removed to some near relatives, in order, after a certain time, to give her hand to a man whom she has long loved; and I sought in travel to dissipate the feeling of desolation which had seized on my heart. It was at this moment that business, or rather Providence, conducted me to you. Admiration, and an interest whose power I cannot describe, drew me toward you; perhaps, unknown to me, darkly operated in me the delightful recollections of my childhood. At this moment they have ascended in all their clearness. I seem now again transported into the years of boyhood, when I called you mother, and loved you even to adoration; and now—" and with passionate tenderness Harald seized the hand of Mrs. Astrid, while he stammered forth—"now . . . what says your heart? . . . Can you trust this dim recollection . . . this narrative without all testimony? . . . May I again call you mother? Can you, will you, receive me as a son?"

"Do I wish it? . . . Feel these tears of joy! I have not shed many such upon earth. I cannot doubt . . . I believe . . . I am happy! . . . Thou art my sister's son, my child . . . I have thee again. But oh! have I found thee merely to see thee die—die here—for my sake? Am I then born to be unfortunate? This moment is bitter!"

"But delightful also!" exclaimed Harald, with warmth; "we have found each other; we are united."

"To die!"

"Rescue is yet possible!"

"But only through a miracle."

"Providence permits wonderful things to happen; we have just had evidence of it!" said Harald, with a gentle, admonitory tone.

"Thou art right, Harald; but I have been so unhappy! I have difficulty to believe in happy miracles. But, at all events, God be praised for this moment, and let His will be done!"

"Amen!" said Harald softly, but with manly fortitude; and both ceased, exhausted, and all was in deep darkness around them, for the moon was gone down, and the snow fell thickly. They seemed to be entombed alive.

But the miracle of rescue was near. There gleamed a light—there were heard voices out of the snowy wilderness.

"Susanna!" exclaimed with one voice Mrs. Astrid and Harald. "Susanna, our angel of salvation!"

And it was Susanna who, with a blazing torch in her hand, rushed into the dark vault. It glittered at once as with a million of diamonds. Some of these gleamed in human eyes.

"You are saved, God be praised!" exclaimed Susanna. "Here are good, strong men who will help you. But we must hasten; the snow falls heavily."

Several peasants, bearing lights and two litters, were now seen; and Mrs. Astrid and Harald were each laid on one of these, and covered with soft skins.

"Susanna," said Mrs. Astrid, "come and rest here by me!"

"Nay," answered Susanna, lifting aloft her torch; "I shall go on before and light the way. Fear not for me; I am strong!"

But a strange sensation suddenly seized her, as if her heart would sink, and her knees failed her. She stood now a moment, then made a step forward as to go, then felt her breast, as it were, crushed together. She dropped on her knees, and the torch fell from her hands. "Hulda!" she whispered to herself, "my little darling . . . farewell!"

"Susanna! great God!" exclaimed now two voices at once; and, strong with terror and surprise, sprang up Mrs. Astrid and Harald, and embraced Susanna. She sank more and more together. She seized the hands of her mistress and of Harald, and said with great difficulty, earnestly praying—"My little Hulda! The fatherless . . . motherless . . . think of her!"

"Susanna! my good, dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Astrid, "thou wilt not, thou shalt not now die!" And for the first time fell a beam of anxious love from her dark eyes upon the young, devoted maiden. It was the first time that Susanna had enjoyed such a glance, and she looked up as joyfully as if she had gazed into the opened heaven.

"O Harald!" said Susanna, while she gazed at him with an inexpressible tenderness and clearness; "I know that I could not make you happy in life, but I thank God that I can die for you. Now—now despise not my love!"—and seizing his hand and that of her mistress, she pressed them to her bosom, saying with a sobbing voice—"Pardon my fault, for—my love's sake!"

A slight shiver passed through her frame, her head sank upon her breast. Without a sign of life, they laid Susanna by her mistress, who held her in her arms, and bathed with her tears the young, pallid countenance.

THE AWAKENING.

> I woke, for life assumed victorious sway,
> And found my being in its weakness lay.
> There the beloved ones round my couch I saw.
>
> Rein.

Months went on, and life was for Susanna merely a wild, uneasy dream. In the delirious fantasies of fever she again lived over the impressions of the mountain-journey, but in darker colours. She saw the subterranean spirits, how in terrible shapes they raged about in the

now wilderness, and sought to suffocate her beneath piles of snow and ice, which they flung upon her. Susanna combated with desperate exertions against them, for she knew that if she fell, the defence for those she loved would be taken away, and that the subterranean ones could seize upon it; and therefore any mass of snow which the spirits cast upon her, she cast back upon them. Finally, the subterranean ones desired a parley, and promised that if she would voluntarily accompany them, they would permit her friends to be at peace; yes, even heap upon them wealth and happiness. Then strove Susanna no longer; but saluting the beautiful heaven, and earth with its green dales and beloved people, whom she should behold no more, let herself be dragged down in silence by the spirits, into their subterranean dwellings, and experienced there inexpressible torments. But she was contented to suffer for those she loved; and out of the dark, cold abyss, where she was doomed to dwell, she sent up the most affectionate, moving farewells to her Hulda, to her mistress, to Harald, and Alette, revealing thereby, unknown to herself, all her heart's secrets, conflicts, and sufferings.

One day it seemed to her that she had already dwelt hundreds of years in the Northern world, and she was now in their church, for her time was up, and she should now die, and in death (that she knew) should she be delivered from the power of the mountain spirits. But she could feel no joy over this, so faint was her heart, so chilled was her bosom. She lay stretched out upon a stone floor, and over her vaulted itself a roof of ice. That was her funeral vault, and there should she die. And by degrees all feelings and senses grew benumbed, all torments vanished, and there came a sleep so deep, but so secret and peaceful, that Susanna, who still retained her consciousness, regarded death as a salutary repose, and wished not to awaken. But it seemed to her that the door of the vault opened, and she saw a light, like that of the sun; and some one approached her, and touched her lips with a flame, a flame as of life. Then beat her heart more rapidly, the blood streamed warmly through her veins, and she looked up and saw a female figure stand by her pillow, which bent over her with a look full of love and compassion. The look, the beautiful life-giving look, Susanna seemed to have seen some time before, and the longer she gazed on the face of this female shape, the better she seemed to recognise familiar features—the noble and beloved features of her mistress. But she looked younger and fairer than formerly. At her feet she saw roses standing, and the sun shone upon them; but all appeared to her so beautiful, so wonderful, that she involuntarily whispered—

"Are we now in heaven?"

"Still on the earth," replied a voice, full of tenderness. "Thou wilt here live for those who love thee."

"Ah! who loves me?" said Susanna, faint and spiritless.

"I!" answered the voice; "I and others. But be calm and quiet—a mother watches over thee."

And Susanna continued calm and quiet, and resigned herself, in her great state of weakness, with gratified confidence to the motherly guardian. Mrs. Astrid's presence, the mere sound of her light tread, the mere sight of her shadow, operated beneficially on her mind; all that she received from her hand was to her delicious and healing. There arose between them a relationship full of pleasantness. Mrs. Astrid, who saw the young girl as it were born anew under her hands, conceived for her an attachment which surprised herself, much as it made her happy. The strong and healthy Susanna had stood too distant from her; the weak, and in her weakness the so child-like affectionate one, had stolen into her heart, and she felt her heart thereby bloom, as it were, anew.

Such is the operation of all true devotion, all true affection, and that in every stage of life; for affection is the summer of life and of the heart.

So soon as strength and clear memory again revived in Susanna, she begged to be informed of the fate of all those who had made the mountain journey. With astonishment and joy did she then learn how Mrs. Astrid had discovered in Harald her sister's son; and how, by this, much darkness had vanished from her life.

Through Sergeant Rönn, and the subsequent inquiries to which his statement led, within a short time perfect clearness was obtained on all that concerned the circumstances of Harald's childhood. It was then discovered that Mr. K. had been a confidant of Colonel Hjelm's, and was of a sufficiently worthless character to enter, for the sake of gain, into the plans of the Colonel, and to receive Harald, and cause him by degrees to forget his former circumstances. Sickness came in aid of severe treatment; and after a sojourn of some months in K.'s house, he found the poor boy so much stupified, that he could, without fear of the betrayal of the secret, yield to the solicitations of Mr. Bergman, and make over to him a child whose daily aspect was a torment to him. But we return now to the present.

Harald, under a skilful medical care in Bergen, after the mountain journey, was quickly restored to health. When he had attended the marriage of Alette, he had travelled abroad, but would, in the course of the summer, return to Semb, where he would settle down, in order to live for the beloved relative whom he had again discovered.

The guide, the honest old peasant of Halling, had met with his death on the mountains. His grandson wept by his corpse till he was himself half dead with hunger and cold, when the people from the dales, sent by Mrs. Astrid and Harald, succeeded in making a way through the snow-drifts to the Björöj-säter, and in rescuing him.

Susanna dropped a tear for the old man's fate, but felt within her a secret regret not to have died like him. She looked toward the future with disquiet. But when she could again leave her bed, when Mrs. Astrid drove her out with her, when she felt the vernal air, and saw the sea, and the clear heaven above the mountains, and the green orchards at their feet; then awoke she again vividly to the feeling of the beauty of the earth, and of life. And she contemplated with admiration and delight the new objects which surrounded her, as well the magnificent

forms of nature as the life and the changing scenes in the city; for Susanna found herself in the lovely and splendidly situated Bergen, the greatest mercantile city of Norway, the birthplace of Hollberg, Dahl, and Ole Bull.

Yet would she speedily separate herself from all this, and, what was still harder, from her adored mistress; for Susanna had firmly determined never again to see Harald. Crimson blushes covered her cheeks when she recollected her confession in the mountains, at the moment when she thought herself at the point of death, and she felt that after this they could not meet, much less live in the same house without mutually painful embarrassment. She would, therefore, not return again to Semb; but, so soon as her health would permit it, would go from Bergen by sea to Sweden, to her native town again, and there, in the bosom of her little darling, seek to heal her own heart, and draw new strength to live and labour.

But it was not easy for poor Susanna to announce this resolve to her mistress. She trembled violently, and could not restrain her tears.

It was at the same time calming and disturbing to her feelings, when Mrs. Astrid, after she had quietly listened to Susanna, answered with much composure—

"You are at liberty, Susanna, to act as you find it best; but in three or four months, for so long will my affairs yet retain me here—in a few months I shall again return to Semb, and it would be a trial to me to be without you on the journey."

"Then I shall accompany you," replied Susanna, glad that she was needed; "but, then . . ."

"Then," began again Mrs. Astrid, "when you will leave me, I shall arrange for your safe return to your native place."

"So, then, yet some months!" thought Susanna, with a melancholy pleasure. And these months were for her inexpressibly pleasant and strengthening. Mrs. Astrid occupied herself much with her, and sought in many particulars to supply the defects of her neglected education. And Susanna was a quick pupil, and more affectionately than ever did she attach herself to her mistress, while she on her part experienced even more and more the truth of the adage: "the breath of youth is wholesome."

In the beginning of the month of July Mrs. Astrid travelled again with Susanna over the mountains which had once threatened them with death; but at this season of the year the journey was not dangerous, though always laborious. Mrs. Astrid was the whole time in the highest spirits, and seemed every day to become more joyous. Susanna's mood of mind, on the contrary, became every day more depressed. Even Mrs. Astrid's gayety contributed to this. She felt herself infinitely solitary.

It was a beautiful July evening when they descended into Heimdal. Susanna's heart swelled with sadness as she saw again the places and the objects which were so dear to her, and which she should now soon quit for ever. Never had they struck her as so enchanting. She saw the sun's beams fall on the Krystalberg, and she called to mind Harald's sagas; she saw the grove of oaks where Mrs. Astrid had sate and had enjoyed the fragrance which Susanna's hand had prepared for her in silence. And the spring where the silver-weed and the ladies-mantle grew, the clear spring where she had spent so many happy hours; Susanna seemed to *thirst* for it. The windows in Semb burned with the radiance of the sun, the house seemed to be illuminated: in that house she had worked and ordered; there she had loved; there the flame of the winter evenings had burned so brightly during Harald's stories. Silently ascended the pillars of smoke from the cottages in the dale, where she was at home, knew each child and each cow, knew the cares and the joys which dwelt there, and where she had first learned rightly to comprehend Harald's good-heartedness—always Harald—always did she find his image as the heart in all these reminiscences. But now—now should she soon leave all this, all that was beautiful and dear!

They arrived now in Semb, and were greeted by Alfiero with barkings of clamorous delight. Susanna, with a tear in her eye, greeted and nodded to all beloved acquaintances, both people and animals.

The windows in Mrs. Astrid's room stood open, and through them were seen charming prospects over the dale, with its azure stream, its green heights and slopes, and the peaceful spire of its church in the background. She herself stood, as in astonishment, at the beauty of the grove, and her eyes flashed as she exclaimed—

"See Susanna! Is not our dale beautiful? And will it not be beautiful to live here, to make men happy, and be happy oneself?"

Susanna answered with a hasty Yes, and left the room. She felt herself ready to choke, and yet once more arose Barbra in her, and spoke thus—

"Beautiful? Yes, for her. She thinks not of me; she troubles herself not the least about me! Nor Harald neither! The poor maid-servant, whom they had need of in the mountain journey, is superfluous in the dale. She may go; they are happy now; they are sufficient to themselves. Whether I live or die, or suffer, it is indifferent to them. Good! I will therefore no longer trouble them. I will go, go far, far from here. I will trouble myself no farther about them; I will forget them as they forget me."

But tears notwithstanding rolled involuntarily over Susanna's cheeks, and the Barbra wrath ran away with them, and Sanna resumed—

"Yes, I will go: but I will bless them wherever I go. May they find a maid equally faithful, equally devoted! May they never miss Susanna! And then, my little Hulda, then my darling and sole joy, soon will I come to thee. I will take thee into my arms, and carry thee to some still corner, where undisturbed I may labour for thee. A bit of bread and a quiet home, I shall find sufficient for us both. And when my heart aches, I will clasp thee to me, thou little soft child, and thank God that I have yet some one on earth whom I can love, and who loves me!"

Just as Susanna finished this ejaculation, she was at the door of her room. She opened it—entered—and stood dumb with astonishment. Were her senses yet confused, or did she now first wake out of year-long dreams? She saw

herself again in that little room in which she had spent so many years of her youth, in that little room which she herself had fitted up, had painted and embellished, and had often described to Harald; and there by the window stood the little Hulda's bed, with its flowery coverlet, and blue muslin hangings. This scene caused the blood to rush violently to Susanna's heart, and, out of herself, she cried—"Hulda! my little Hulda!"

"Here I am, Sanna! Here is thy little Hulda!" answered the clear joyous voice of a child, and the coverlet of the bed moved, and an angelically beautiful child's head peeped out, and two small white arms stretched themselves towards Susanna. With a cry of almost wild joy Susanna sprang forward, and clasped the little sister in her arms.

Susanna was pale, wept and laughed, and knew not for some time what went on around her. But when she had collected herself, she found herself sitting on Hulda's bed, with the child folded in her arms, and over the little, light-locked head, lifted itself a manly one, with an expression of deep seriousness and gentle emotion.

"Entreat Susanna, little Hulda," said Harald, "that she bestow a little regard on me, and that she does not say nay to what you have granted me; beg that I may call little Hulda my daughter, and that I may call your Susanna, my Susanna!"

"O yes! That shalt thou, Susanna!" exclaimed little Hulda, while she with child-like affection threw her arms about Susanna's neck, and continued zealously: "O, do like him, Susanna! He likes thee so much; that he has told me so often, and he has himself brought me hither to give thee joy. And seest thou this beautiful necklace he has given me, and he has promised to tell me such pleasant stories in winter. He can tell so many, do you know! Hast thou heard about Rypan in Justedale, Sanna? He has told me that! And about the good lady who went about after the Black Death, and collected all the motherless little children, and was a mother to them. O Sanna! Do like him, and let him be my father!"

Susanna let the little prattler go on without being able to say a word. She buried her face in her bosom, and endeavoured to collect her confused thoughts.

"Susanna!" prayed Harald, restlessly and tenderly. "Look at me! Speak to me a kind word!"

Then raised Susanna her burning and tear-bathed countenance, saying, "O! how shall I ever be able to thank you!"

"How?" said Harald. "By making me happy, Susanna. By becoming my wife."

Susanna stood up, while she said with as much candour as cordiality, "God knows best how happy I should feel myself, if I could believe—if words were spoken for your own sake, and not merely for mine. But ah! I cannot do it. I know that it is your generosity and goodness——"

"Generosity? Then am I right generous towards myself. For I assure you, Susanna, that I never thought more of my own advantage than at this moment; that I am now as completely egotistical as you could desire."

"And your sister Alette," continued Susanna, with downcast eyes; "I know that she does not wish to call me her sister, and——"

"And since Alette once was so stupid," said now a friendly female voice, "therefore is she here to deprecate it." And Alette embraced heartily the astonished Susanna, whilst she continued—"O Susanna! without you I should now no longer have a brother. I know you better now, and I have read in the depths of his heart and know that he can now no longer be happy but through you. Therefore I implore you, Susanna, implore you earnestly, to make him happy. Be his wife, Susanna, and be my sister."

"And you too," Alette," said Susanna, deeply moved; "will you too mislead me with your sweet words? Ah! could you make me forget that it is my weakness—that is, I who, through my confession, have called forth— But that can I never; and, therefore, can I not believe you, ye good, ye noble ones! And, therefore, I implore and adjure you—"

"What fine speeches are making here?" now interrupted a solemn voice, and Mrs. Astrid stood before the affectionately contending group, and spoke thus with an assumed sternness. "I will hope that my young relatives and my daughter Susanna do not take upon them to transact and to determine important affairs without taking me into the council! But yes, I perceive by your guilty countenances that this is the fact; and, therefore, I shall punish you altogether. Not another word of the business, then, till eight days are over; and then I demand and require, as lady and mistress of this house, that the dispute be brought before me, and that I have a word to say in the decision. Susanna remains here in the mean time in safe keeping, and I myself shall undertake to watch her. Dost thou believe seriously, Susanna," and Mrs. Astrid's voice changed into the most affectionate tones, while she clasped the young maiden in her arms, "dost thou believe that thou canst so easily escape me?! No, no, my child, thou deceivest thyself there. Since thou hast saved our lives, thou hast become our life-captive—thou, and with thy little Hulda! But supper is laid under the lime-trees in the garden, my child; and let us gather strength from it for the approaching strife."

THE LAST STRIFE.

> The winged troops hie
> From the black woods outpouring;
> Under them fly
> Storms and waves roaring.
> Over them waken
> Mild stars, and beckon
> The troop to the sheltering palms.
>
> AUTUMN SONG, BY VELHAVEN.

THERE is on earth much sorrow and much darkness; there is crime and sickness, the shriek of despair, and the deep, long, silent torture. Ah! who can name them all, the sufferings of humanity, in their manifold, pale dispensations?! But, God be praised! there is also an affluence of goodness and joy; there are noble deeds, fulfilled hopes, moments of rapture, decades of blissful peace, bright marriage-days, and calm, holy death-beds.

Three months after the strife just mentioned, there was solemnized at Semb, in Heimdal, one

of those bright wedding-days, when the suns of nature and of men's hearts combined to call forth on earth a paradise, which is always to be found there, though frequently hidden, fettered, deeply bound by the subterranean powers.

> Yet from the faces of the fallen shine out
> The lofty features of their heavenly birth,
> And Daphne's heart beats 'neath the rugged bark.
> *Tegner.*

It was an autumn day, but one of those autumn days when a sun warm as summer, and a crystally pure air cause the earth to stand forth in the brightest splendour before the azure-blue eyes of heaven; when Nature resembles a novice, who adorns herself the most at the moment that she is about to take the nun's veil, and to descend into her winterly grave. The heights of the dale shone in the most gorgeous play of colours. The dark pines, the soft-green firs, the golden-tinged birches, the hazels with their pale leaves, and the mountain ashes with their bunches of scarlet berries, arranged themselves on these in a variety of changing masses; while the Heimdal river, intoxicated with the floods of heaven, roared onward more impetuous and powerful than ever. Many-coloured herds, which had returned flat and plump from the säters, wandered on its green banks. The chapel-bells rung joyously in the clear air, while the church-going people streamed along the winding footpath from their cottages towards the house of God. From the margin of the river at Semb ran a little fleet of festally adorned boats. In the most stately of these sat, under a canopy of leaves and flowers, the Lady of Semb; but no longer the pale, sorrowful one, whose glances seemed to seek the grave. A new youth appeared now to play upon her cheeks, to breathe upon her lips, while the clear eyes, with a glad and quiet enjoyment, gazed around her, now on the beauties of nature, and now on a more beautiful sight which she had immediately before her eyes—a happy human pair. Near her, more like a little angel than a mortal child, sat little Hulda, with a wreath of the flowers called by the Norwegians 'thousand-peace,' in her bright locks. All looks, however—as they ought—were fixed on the bride and bridegroom; and both were, in truth, handsome and charming to look upon; the more so, because they appeared so perfectly happy. In a following boat was seen a little strife between a young lady and her husband, who would wrap round her a cloak, which she would not willingly have. The spectators were tempted to take part with him in his tender care for the young wife, who was soon to become a mother. The issue of this strife was, that—Alf got the upper hand of Alette. Other boats contained other wedding guests. The men who rowed the boats had all wreaths round their yellow straw hats. And thus so advanced the little fleet, amid joyous music, along the river to the chapel.

The chapel was a simple building, without any other ornament than a beautiful altar-piece, and an abundance of flowers and green branches, which now, for the occasion, adorned the seats, the walls, and the floor.

The sermon was simple and cordial, the singing pure; in a word, no dissonant tone came hither to disturb the devotion which the arrangement of divine service in Norway is so well adapted to call forth and maintain.*

Here Harald and Susanna called on Heaven, from faithful and earnest hearts, to bless their sincere intention, in joy and in trouble on the earth, to love one another, and were declared by the congregation to be a pair.

Many people had come this day to church; and when the wedding-train returned homewards, many boats joined themselves to it, and followed it to the opposite shore with singing and loud huzzas.

But Susanna did not feel herself truly calm and happy till in Mrs. Astrid's quiet room she had bowed her forehead on her knee, and had felt her maternal hands laid in blessing upon her head. Her heart was so full of gratitude it seemed ready to burst.

"I have then a mother!" she exclaimed, as she embraced Mrs. Astrid's knees, and looked up to her with the warmest and most child-like affection;—"Ah! I am too happy, far too happy! God has given me, the poor solitary one, a home and a mother——"

"And a husband too! Forget him not, I beseech! He too will be included!" said Harald, as he gently embraced Susanna, and also bent his knee before the maternal friend.

Mrs. Astrid clasped them both warmly in her arms, and said, with a still, inward voice, as she went with them to the window, whence was seen the beautiful dale in all its whole extent: "We begin to-day together a new life, and we will together endeavour to make it happy. At this moment when I stand surrounded by you, my children, and looking forward as it were into a beautiful future, I seem to myself so well to understand how that may be. We have not here the treasures of art; we have not the life of the great world, with its varying scenes, to enliven and entertain us; but our lives need not therefore be heavy and earthbound. We have Heaven, and we have—Nature! We will call down the former into our hearts and into our home, and we will inquire of the latter concerning its silent wonders, and through their contemplation elevate our spirits. By the flame of our quiet hearth we will sometimes contemplate the movements of the great world-drama, in order thereafter with the greater joy to return to our own little scene, and consider how we can best, each of us, play out our part. And I promise you beforehand," continued Mrs. Astrid, assuming a playful tone, "that mine shall not be, to make so long a speech as now!"

But both Harald and Susanna joined in assuring Mrs. Astrid that she could not possibly speak too long.

"Well, well," said she friendlily; "if you will sometimes listen to the old woman's preachings, she, on the other hand, will often be a child

* The divine service in Norway is not, as still in Sweden, mingled with worldly affairs. After the sermon, merely some short prayers are read, in which the clergyman blesses the people in the same words which for thousands of years have been uttered over the wanderers of the deserts. They have not here the barbaric custom of reading from the pulpit announcements of all possible things—inquiries after thieves and stolen pieces of clothing, etc., which to the worshippers, and especially to the partakers of the sacrament, are so unspeakably painful, and in cold winters' days are enough to freeze all devotion.

with you, and learn with you, and of you. I am at this moment equally curious about nature, and long to make a closer acquaintance with her. The thought of it throws a kind of vernal splendour over my autumn."

"And assuredly," said Harald, "the intercourse with nature operates beneficently, and with a youth-restoring power upon the human heart. I always remember with delight the words of Goethe, when, in his eightieth year, he returned one spring from a visit in the country, sunburnt and full of gladness: 'I have had a conversation with the vine,' said he, 'and you cannot believe what beautiful things it has said to me.' Do we not seem here to behold a new golden age beam forth, in which the voices of nature become audible to the ear of man, and he in conversation with her to acquire higher wisdom and tranquillity of life?"

"Our wisdom," said Mrs. Astrid, as she looked smilingly around, "has not in the mean time prevented Susanna from being more sensible than us, for she has thought of the wedding-guests, while we have quite forgotten them. But we will now follow her!"

After the wedding-dinner, spiced with skals and songs, and especially with hearty merriment, Mrs. Astrid retired to her own room, and Alette assumed the hostess's office in the company.

Sitting at her writing-table, Mrs. Astrid, with an animated air, and quick respiration, sketched the following lines:

"Now come, come, my paternal friend, and behold your wishes, your prognostications fulfilled; come and behold happiness and inexpressible gratitude living in the bosom which so long was closed even to hope. Come, and receive my contrition for my pusillanimity, for my murmurings; come, and help me to be thankful! I long to tell you orally how much is changed within me; how a thousand germs of life and gladness, which I believed to be dead, now spring up in my soul restored to youth. I wonder daily over the feelings, the impressions which I experience; I scarcely know myself again. O my friend! how right you were —it is never TOO LATE!

"Ah! that I could be heard by all oppressed, dejected souls! I would cry to them—'Lift up your head, and confide still in the future, and believe that it is never TOO LATE!' See! I too was bowed down by long suffering, and old age had moreover overtaken me, and I believed that all my strength had vanished; that my life, my sufferings were in vain—and behold! my head has been again lifted up, my heart appeased, my soul strengthened; and now, in my fiftieth year, I advance into a new future, attended by all that life has of beautiful and worthy of love.

"The change in my soul has enabled me better to comprehend life and suffering, and I am now firmly convinced *that there is no fruitless suffering, and that no virtuous endeavour is in vain.* Winter days and nights may bury beneath their pall of snow the sown corn; but when the spring arrives, it will be found equally true, that 'there grows much bread in the winter night.' It has pleased Providence to remove the covering from my eyes here upon earth; for many others will this only be removed when their eyes have closed on the earthly day; all will, however, one day see what I now see, and acknowledge what I now acknowledge with joy and thankfulness.

"Clear and bright now lies my way before me. In concert with my beloved children, with the teacher of my youth, and my friend, who I hope will spend in my house the evening of his days, I will convert this place into a vale of peace. And when I shall leave it and them, may peace still remain among them with my memory! And now, thou advancing age, which already breathes coldly on my forehead; thou winter twilight of earthly life, in which my days will sink more and more, come and welcome! I fear thee no longer; for it has become warm and light in my heart. Even under bodily spasms and pains, I will no more misconceive the value of life; but with an eye open to all the good upon earth, I will say to my dear ones:

Bewail me not, for I am still so blest,
The peace of heaven doth dwell within my breast."

Mrs. Astrid laid down her pen, and lifted up her tear-bright and beaming eyes; she caught sight of Harald and Susanna, who arm-in-arm wandered down the dale. They went on in gladness, and yet seemed to contend; and the question between them was, indeed, upon a most important matter—namely, which of them should hereafter have in their house the *last word*. Harald wished that this should hereafter be, as lord and master, his exclusive prerogative. Susanna declared that she should not trouble herself about his prerogative; but when she was in the right intended to persist in it to the uttermost. In the mean time they had unconsciously advanced to the spring—the Water of Strife—which had witnessed their first contention, and over which now doves, as at the first time, circled with silver-glancing wings. And here Harald seized Susanna's hand, led her to the spring, and said solemnly—

"My wife! I have hitherto spoken jestingly, but now is the moment of seriousness. Our forefathers swore by the bright water of Leipter, and I now swear by the water of this clear spring, that if thou hereafter shalt oppose me beyond the power of my mind to bear, I will silence thee, and compel thee to hold thy peace in this manner—"

The doves, attracted by some wonderful sympathy, now flew rapidly down upon the head and shoulders of the young couple. All strife was hushed, and you might hear the soft and playful murmur of the spring, which seemed to whisper about—what?

O heaven azure well,
Say what thou now didst see!

The well whispered—

"By a kiss—two disputants
United happily!"

"Aha! here we have them!" exclaimed a merry voice, a little way behind the two who were kissing; "but I must tell you that it is not polite thus to go from your guests, to—"

"Come, Susanna, interposed Alette smiling, while she took the arm of the deeply blushing Susanna, "come, and let us leave these egotistical gentlemen, who always will be waited

upon, to themselves a little. It does them an infinite deal of good. We will in the mean time go together, and open our hearts to each other about them."

"Sweet Alette!" said Susanna, glad in this way to be released from Brother-in-law Lexow's jokes, "how happy it makes me to see you so gay and healthy, spite of your residence up in the North, which you feared so much."

"Ah!" said Alette, softly and sincerely, "a husband like my Lexow can make summer and happiness blossom forth all over the earth; but ——" and now again the melancholy expression crept over Alette's countenance; but she constrained herself, and continued joyfully, "but we need not now hold forth in praise of these good gentlemen, who, I observe, have nothing better to do than to come and listen to us; and therefore—(and here Alette raised her voice significantly)—since we have done with my dear husband, we will give yours his well-merited share. Has he not shockingly many faults? Is he not—between us two—selfish and despotic?"

"That I deny!" exclaimed Harald, as he sprang forward, and placed himself before Susanna; "and thou, my wife, contradict it if thou—dare."

"Dare!" exclaimed Alette; "she must dare it, for you strengthen my word by your deed. Is he not a despot, Susanna?"

"Am I a despot, Susanna? I say a thousand times 'No!' thereto. What dost thou say?"

"I say—nothing," said Susanna blushing, with a graceful movement, and drew closer to Alette; "but—I think what I will."

"It is good, however," cried Harald, "that I have found out a way to have the last word!"

"Have you discovered that, brother-in-law?" said Lexow, laughing; "now, that is almost a more important discovery than that which Columbus made. Impart it to me above all things."

"It will serve you nothing at all," said Alette, as, with jesting defiance, she turned her pretty little head towards him; "because my last word is, in every case, a different kind of one to yours."

"How?"

"Yes. My last word, as well as my last thought, remains—Alf!"

"My Alette! my sweet Alette! why these tears?"

"Susanna," whispered Harald, "I will prepare you for it in time, that my last word remains—Sanna!"

"And mine—Harald!"

Susanna went now again on Harald's arm, Alette on her Alf's.

After we have, towards the end of our relation, presented such cheerful scenes—ah! why must we communicate one of a more tragical nature? But so fate commands, and we are compelled to relate, that ——— the grey and the white ganders—weep not, sentimental reader! which already, three weeks before Susanna's marriage, had been put up to fatten, closed a contentious life a few days before the same, and were united in a magnificent *à la daube*, which was served up and eaten, to celebrate the day of Harald's and Susanna's Last Strife and the beginning of an eternal union.

Often afterwards, during her happy married life, stood Susanna by the clear spring, surrounded by the feathered herd, which she fed, whilst she sang to two little, healthy, brown-eyed boys, and to a young blooming girl, this little song, with the conviction of a happy heart:

> At times a little brawl
> Injures not at all,
> If we only love each other still
> Cloudy heaven clears
> Itself, and bright appears,
> For such is Nature's will.
>
> The heart within its cage
> Is a bird in rage,
> Which doth madly strive to fly!
> Love and truth can best
> Flatter it to rest,
> Flatter it to rest so speedily.*

AN AFTER-WORD.

FRIENDLY reader! Now that thou hast arrived at a happy conclusion of the foregoing contentions, thou perhaps dost not dream that now a contest exists between—thee and—me! But it will infallibly be so, if thou, as often has happened before, wilt call that a Novel, which I have called Sketches, and which have no pretension to the severe connexion and development of the novel; although, to be sure, they be connected. If thou wilt, on the contrary, regard them—for example—as blades of grass, or as flowers upon a meadow molehill, which wave in the wind upon their several stalks, but which have their roots in the same soil, and unfold themselves in the light of one common sun; behold then, we conclude in peace, and I wish only that they may whisper to thy heart some friendly word, respecting the point of light which may be found in every circumstance, in every portion of existence—respecting the spring, which, for noble souls, sooner or later, reveals itself from its wintry concealment. To the Norwegian authors, who in the mountain journey, or in my wandering among the legends of the country, were my guides, I here offer my thanks; and also from the depth of my heart to many benevolent and amiable people, whom I have become acquainted with in that beautiful country, in whose woods one breathes so fresh and free, in whose hospitable bosom I also once found a dear and peaceful home.

THE AUTHORESS.

* Geijer.

THE END.

OLD CURIOSITY SHOP.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

("BOZ.")

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TO

SAMUEL ROGERS, ESQUIRE.

My Dear Sir,

Let me have *my* Pleasures of Memory in connexion with this book, by dedicating it to a Poet whose writings (as all the world knows) are replete with generous and earnest feeling; and to a Man whose daily life (as all the world does not know) is one of active sympathy with the poorest and humblest of his kind.

Your faithful friend,

Charles Dickens.

PREFACE.

When the author commenced this Work, he proposed to himself three objects.

First. To establish a periodical, which should enable him to present, under one general head, and not as separate and distinct publications, certain fictions which he had it in contemplation to write.

Secondly. To produce these Tales in weekly numbers; hoping that to shorten the intervals of communication between himself and his readers, would be to knit more closely the pleasant relations they had held for Forty Months.

Thirdly. In the execution of this weekly task, to have as much regard as its exigencies would permit, to each story as a whole, and to the possibility of its publication at some distant day, apart from the machinery in which it had its origin.

The characters of Master Humphrey and his three friends, and the little fancy of the clock, were the result of these considerations. When he sought to interest his readers in those who talked, and read, and listened, he revived Mr. Pickwick and his humble friends; not with any intention of reopening an exhausted and abandoned mine, but to connect them in the thoughts of those whose favourites they had been, with the tranquil enjoyments of Master Humphrey.

It was never the author's intention to make the Members of Master Humphrey's Clock, active agents in the stories they are supposed to relate. Having brought himself in the commencement of his undertaking to feel an interest in these quiet creatures, and to imagine them in their old chamber of meeting, eager listeners to all he had to tell, the author hoped—as authors will—to succeed in awakening some of his own emotions in the bosoms of his readers. Imagining Master Humphrey in his chimney-corner, resuming, night after night, the narrative,—say, of the Old Curiosity Shop—picturing to himself the various sensations of his hearers—thinking how Jack Redburn might incline to poor Kit, and perhaps lean too favourably even towards the lighter vices of Mr. Richard Swiveller—how the deaf gentleman would have his favourite, and Mr. Miles his—and how all these gentle spirits would trace some faint reflection of their past lives in the varying current of the tale—he has insensibly fallen into the belief that they are present to his readers as they are to him, and has forgotten that like one whose vision is disordered he may be conjuring up bright figures where there is nothing but empty space.

The short papers which are to be found at the beginning of this volume were indispensable to the form of publication and the limited extent of each number, as no story of lengthened interest could be begun until "The Clock" was wound up and fairly going.

The author would fain hope that there are not many who would disturb Master Humphrey and his friends in their seclusion; who would have them forego their present enjoyments, to exchange those confidences with each other, the absence of which is the foundation of their mutual trust. For when their occupation is gone, when their tales are ended and but their personal histories remain, the chimney-corner wil' be growing cold, and the Clock will be about to stop for ever.

One other word on his own person, and he returns to the more grateful task of speaking for those imaginary people whose little world lies within these pages.

It may be some consolation to the well-disposed ladies or gentlemen who, in the interval between the conclusion of his last work, and the commencement of this, originated a report that he had gone raving mad, to know that it spread as rapidly as could be desired, and was made the subject of considerable dispute; not as regarded the fact, for that was as thoroughly established as the duel between Sir Peter Teazle and Charles Surface in the School for Scandal; but with reference to the unfortunate lunatic's place of confinement: one party insisting positively on Bedlam, another inclining favourably towards Saint Luke's, and a third swearing strongly by the asylum at Hanwell; while each backed its case by circumstantial evidence of the same excellent nature as that brought to bear by Sir Benjamin Backbite on the pistol-shot, which struck against the little bronze bust of Shakspeare over the fire-place, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

It will be a great affliction to these ladies and gentlemen to learn—and he is so unwilling to give pain, that he would not whisper the circumstance on any account, did he not feel in a manner bound to do so, in gratitude to those among his friends who were at the trouble of being angry with the absurdity—that their invention made the author's home unusually merry, and gave rise to an extraordinary number of jests, of which he will only add, in the words of the good Vicar of Wakefield, "I cannot say whether we had more wit among us than usual; but I am sure we had more laughing."

Devonshire Terrace, York Gate,
September, 1840.

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MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK.

MASTER HUMPHREY, FROM HIS CLOCK-SIDE IN THE CHIMNEY-CORNER.

THE reader must not expect to know where I live. At present, it is true, my abode may be a question of little or no import to anybody, but if I should carry my readers with me, as I hope to do, and there should spring up, between them and me, feelings of homely affection and regard attaching something of interest to matters ever so slightly connected with my fortunes or my speculations, even my place of residence might one day have a kind of charm for them. Bearing this possible contingency in mind, I wish them to understand in the outset, that they must never expect to know it.

I am not a churlish old man. Friendless I can never be, for all mankind are of my kindred, and I am on ill terms with no one member of my great family. But for many years I have led a lonely, solitary life;—what wound I sought to heal, what sorrow to forget, originally, matters not now; it is sufficient that retirement has become a habit with me, and that I am unwilling to break the spell which for so long a time has shed its quiet influence upon my home and heart.

I live in a venerable suburb of London, in an old house, which in bygone days was a famous resort for merry roysterers and peerless ladies, long since departed. It is a silent shady place, with a paved court-yard so full of echoes, that sometimes I am tempted to believe that faint responses to the noises of old times linger there yet, and that these ghosts of sound haunt my footsteps as I pace it up and down. I am the more confirmed in this belief, because, of late years, the echoes that attend my walks have been less loud and marked than they were wont to be; and it is pleasanter to imagine in them the rustling of silk brocade, and the light step of some lovely girl, than to recognise in their altered note the failing tread of an old man.

Those who like to read of brilliant rooms and gorgeous furniture, would derive but little pleasure from a minute description of my simple dwelling. It is dear to me for the same reason that they would hold it in

slight regard. Its worm-eaten doors, and low ceilings crossed by clumsy beams; its walls of wainscot, dark stairs, and gaping closets; its small chambers, communicating with each other by winding passages or narrow steps; its many nooks, scarce larger than its corner-cupboards; its very dust and dullness, all are dear to me. The moth and spider are my constant tenants, for in my house the one basks in his long sleep, and the other plies his busy loom, secure and undisturbed. I have a pleasure in thinking on a summer's day, how many butterflies have sprung for the first time into light and sunshine from some dark corner of these old walls.

When I first came to live here, which was many years ago, the neighbours were curious to know who I was, and whence I came, and why I lived so much alone. As time went on, and they still remained unsatisfied on these points, I became the centre of a popular ferment, extending for half a mile round, and in one direction for a full mile. Various rumours were circulated to my prejudice. I was a spy, an infidel, a conjuror, a kidnapper of children, a refugee, a priest, a monster. Mothers caught up their infants and ran into their houses as I passed; men eyed me spitefully, and muttered threats and curses. I was the object of suspicion and distrust: ay, of downright hatred, too.

But when in course of time they found I did no harm, but, on the contrary, inclined towards them despite their unjust usage, they began to relent. I found my footsteps no longer dogged, as they had often been before, and observed that the women and children no longer retreated, but would stand and gaze at me as I passed their doors. I took this for a good omen, and waited patiently for better times. By degrees I began to make friends among these humble folks, and though they were yet shy of speaking, would give them "good day," and so pass on. In a little time, those whom I had thus accosted, would make a point of coming to their doors and windows at the usual hour, and nod or curtsey to me; children, too, came timidly within my reach, and ran away quite scared when I patted their heads and bade them be good at school. These little people soon grew more familiar. From exchanging mere words of course with my older neighbours, I gradually became their friend and adviser, the depository of their cares and sorrows, and sometimes, it may be, the reliever, in my small way, of their distresses. And now I never walk abroad, but pleasant recognitions and smiling faces wait on Master Humphrey.

It was a whim of mine, perhaps as a whet to the curiosity of my neighbours, and a kind of retaliation upon them for their suspicions,—it was, I say, a whim of mine, when I first took up my abode in this place, to acknowledge no other name than Humphrey. With my detractors, I was Ugly Humphrey. When I began to convert them into friends, I was Mr. Humphrey, and old Mr. Humphrey. At length I settled down into plain Master Humphrey, which was understood to be the title most pleasant to my ear; and so completely a matter of course has it become, that sometimes when I am taking my morning walk in my little court-yard, I overhear my barber—who has a profound respect for me, and would not, I am sure, abridge my honours for the world—holding forth on the other side of the wall, touching the state of "Master Humphrey's" health, and communicating to some friend the substance of the conversation that he and Master Humphrey have had together in the course of the shaving which he has just concluded.

That I may not make acquaintance with my readers under false pretences, or give them cause to complain hereafter that I have withheld any matter which it was essential for them to have learnt at first, I wish them to know—and I smile sorrowfully to think that the time has been when the confession would have given me pain—that I am a mis-shapen, deformed, old man.

I have never been made a misanthrope by this cause. I have never been stung by any insult, nor wounded by any jest upon my crooked figure. As a child I was melancholy and timid, but that was because the gentle consideration paid to my misfortune sunk deep into my spirit and made me sad, even in those early days. I was but a very young creature when my poor mother died, and yet I remember that often when I hung around her neck, and oftener still when I played about the room before her, she would catch me to her bosom, and bursting into tears, soothe me with every term of fondness and affection. God knows I was a happy child at those times—happy to nestle in her breast—happy to weep when she did—happy in not knowing why.

These occasions are so strongly impressed upon my memory, that they seem to have occupied whole years. I had numbered very few when they ceased for ever, but before then their meaning had been revealed to me.

I do not know whether all children are imbued with a quick perception of childish grace and beauty and a strong love for it, but I was. I had no thought that I remember, either that I possessed it myself or that I lacked it, but I admired it with an intensity I cannot describe. A little knot of playmates—they must have been beau

tiful, for I see them now,—were clustered one day round my mother's knee in eager admiration of some picture representing a group of infant angels, which she held in her hand. Whose the picture was, whether it was familiar to me or otherwise, or how all the children came to be there, I forget: I have some dim thought it was my birthday, but the beginning of my recollection is that we were all together in a garden, and it was summer weather—I am sure of that, for one of the little girls had roses in her sash. There were many lovely angels in this picture, and I remember the fancy coming upon me to point out which of them represented each child there, and that when I had gone through all my companions, I stopped and hesitated, wondering which was most like me. I remember the children looking at each other, and my turning red and hot, and their crowding round to kiss me, saying that they loved me all the same; and then, and when the old sorrow came into my dear mother's mild and tender look, the truth broke upon me for the first time, and I knew, while watching my awkward and ungainly sports, how keenly she had felt for her poor crippled boy.

I used frequently to dream of it afterwards, and now my heart aches for that child as if I had never been he, when I think how often he awoke from some fairy change to his own old form, and sobbed himself to sleep again.

Well, well—all these sorrows are past. My glancing at them may not be without its use, for it may help in some measure to explain why I have all my life been attached to the inanimate objects that people my chamber, and how I have come to look upon them rather in the light of old and constant friends, than as mere chairs and tables which a little money could replace at will.

Chief and first among all these is my Clock—my old cheerful companionable Clock. How can I ever convey to others an idea of the comfort and consolation that this old clock has been for years to me!

It is associated with my earliest recollections. It stood upon the staircase at home (I call it home still, mechanically) nigh sixty years ago. I like it for that, but it is not on that account, nor because it is a quaint old thing in a huge oaken case curiously and richly carved, that I prize it as I do. I incline to it as if it were alive, and could understand and give me back the love I bear it.

And what other thing that has not life could cheer me as it does; what other thing that has not life (I will not say how few things that have) could have proved the same patient, true, untiring friend! How often have I sat in the long winter evenings feeling such society in its cricket-voice, that raising my eyes from my book and looking gratefully towards it, the face reddened by the glow of the shining fire has seemed to relax from its staid expression and to regard me kindly; how often in the summer twilight, when my thoughts have wandered back to a melancholy past, have its regular whisperings recalled them to the calm and peaceful present; how often in the dead tranquillity of night has its bell broken the oppressive silence, and seemed to give me assurance that the old clock was still a faithful watcher at my chamber door! My easy-chair, my desk, my ancient furniture, my very books, I can scarcely bring myself to love even these last, like my old clock!

It stands in a snug corner, midway between the fireside and a low arched door leading to my bed-room. Its fame is diffused so extensively throughout the neighbourhood, that I have often the satisfaction of hearing the publican or the baker, and sometimes even the parish-clerk, petitioning my housekeeper (of whom I shall have much to say bye and bye,) to inform him the exact time by Master Humphrey's Clock. My barber, to whom I have already referred, would sooner believe it than the sun. Nor are these its only distinctions. It has acquired, I am happy to say, another, inseparably connecting it not only with my enjoyments and reflections, but with those of other men; as I shall now relate.

I lived alone here for a long time without any friend or acquaintance. In the course of my wanderings by night and day, at all hours and seasons, in city streets and quiet country parts, I came to be familiar with certain faces, and to take it to heart as quite a heavy disappointment if they failed to present themselves each at its accustomed spot. But these were the only friends I knew, and beyond them I had none.

It happened, however, when I had gone on thus for a long time, that I formed an acquaintance with a deaf gentleman, which ripened into intimacy and close companionship. To this hour, I am ignorant of his name. It is his humour to conceal it, or he has a reason and purpose for so doing. In either case I feel that he has a right to require a return of the trust he has reposed, and as he has never sought to discover my secret, I have never sought to penetrate his. There may have been something in this tacit confidence in each other, flattering and pleasant to us both, and it may have imparted in the beginning an additional zest, perhaps, to our friendship. Be this as it may, we have grown to be like brothers, and still I only know him as the deaf gentleman.

I have said that retirement has become a habit with me. When I add that the deaf gentleman and I have two friends, I communicate nothing which is inconsistent with that declaration. I spend many hours of every day in solitude and study, have no friends or change of friends but these, only see them at stated periods, and am supposed to be of a retired spirit by the very nature and object of our association.

We are men of secluded habits with something of a cloud upon our early fortunes, whose enthusiasm nevertheless has not cooled with age, whose spirit of romance is not yet quenched, who are content to ramble through the world in a pleasant dream, rather than ever waken again to its harsh realities. We are alchemists who would extract the essence of perpetual youth from dust and ashes, tempt coy Truth in many light and airy forms from the bottom of her well, and discover one crumb of comfort or one grain of good in the commonest and least regarded matter that passes through our crucible. Spirits of past times, creatures of imagination, and people of to-day, are alike the objects of our seeking, and, unlike the objects of search with most philosophers, we can ensure their coming at our command.

The deaf gentleman and I first began to beguile our days with these fancies, and our nights in communicating them to each other. We are now four. But in my room there are six old chairs, and we have decided that the two empty seats shall always be placed at our table when we meet, to remind us that we may yet increase our company by that number, if we should find two men to our mind. When one among us dies, his chair will always be set in its usual place, but never occupied again; and I have caused my will to be so drawn out, that when we are all dead, the house shall be shut up, and the vacant chairs still left in their accustomed places. It is pleasant to think that even then, our shades may, perhaps, assemble together as of yore we did, and join in ghostly converse.

One night in every week, as the clock strikes ten, we meet. At the second stroke of two, I am alone.

And now shall I tell how that my old servant, besides giving us note of time, and ticking cheerful encouragement of our proceedings, lends its name to our society, which for its punctuality and my love, is christened "Master Humphrey's Clock!" Now shall I tell, how that in the bottom of the old dark closet where the steady pendulum throbs and beats with healthy action, though the pulse of him who made it stood still long ago and never moved again, there are piles of dusty papers constantly placed there by our hands, that we may link our enjoyments with my old friend, and draw means to beguile time from the heart of time itself? Shall I, or can I, tell with what a secret pride I open this repository when we meet at night, and still find new store of pleasure in my dear old Clock!

Friend and companion of my solitude! mine is not a selfish love; I would not keep your merits to myself, but disperse something of pleasant association with your image through the whole wide world; I would have men couple with your name cheerful and healthy thoughts; I would have them believe that you keep true and honest time; and how would it gladden me to know that they recognised some hearty English work in Master Humphrey's Clock!

THE CLOCK-CASE.

It is my intention constantly to address my readers from the chimney-corner, and I would fain hope that such accounts as I shall give them of our histories and proceedings, our quiet speculations or more busy adventures, will never be unwelcome. Lest, however, I should grow prolix in the outset by lingering too long upon our little association, confounding the enthusiasm with which I regard this chief happiness of my life with that minor degree of interest which those to whom I address myself may be supposed to feel for it, I have deemed it expedient to break off as they have seen.

But still clinging to my old friend and naturally desirous that all its merits should be known, I am tempted to open (somewhat irregularly and against our laws, I must admit) the clock-case. The first roll of paper on which I lay my hand is in the writing of the deaf gentleman. I shall have to speak of him in my next paper, and how can I better approach that welcome task than by prefacing it with a production of his own pen, consigned to the safe keeping of my honest clock by his own hands? The manuscript runs thus:

INTRODUCTION TO THE GIANT CHRONICLES.

Once upon a time, that is to say, in this our time,—the exact year, month, and day, are of no matter,—there dwelt in the city of London a substantial citizen, who united in his single person the dignities of wholesale fruiterer, alderman, common-councilman, and member of the worshipful company of Patten-makers: who had superadded to these extraordinary distinctions the important post and title of Sheriff, and who at length, and to crown all, stood next in rotation for the high and honourable office of Lord Mayor.

He was a very substantial citizen indeed. His face was like the full moon in a fog, with two little holes punched out for his eyes, a very ripe pear stuck on for his nose, and a wide gash to serve for a mouth. The girth of his waistcoat was hung up and lettered in his tailor's shop as an extraordinary curiosity. He breathed like a heavy snorer, and his voice in speaking came thickly forth, as if it were oppressed and stifled by feather-beds. He trod the ground like an elephant, and eat and drank like—like nothing but an alderman, as he was.

This worthy citizen had risen to his great eminence from small beginnings. He had once been a very lean, weazen little boy, never dreaming of carrying such a weight of flesh upon his bones or of money in his pockets, and glad enough to take his dinner at a baker's door, and his tea at a pump. But he had long ago forgotten all this, as it was proper that a wholesale fruiterer, alderman, common-councilman, member of the worshipful company of Patten-makers, past sheriff, and above all, a Lord Mayor that was to be, should; and he never forgot it more completely in all his life than on the eighth of November, in the year of his election to the great golden civic chair, which was the day before his grand dinner at the Guildhall.

It happened that as he sat that evening all alone in his counting-house, looking over the bill of fare for next day, and checking off the fat capons in fifties and the turtle-soup by the hundred quarts for his private amusement,—it happened that as he sat alone occupied in these pleasant calculations, a strange man came in and asked him how he did: adding, "If I am half as much changed as you, sir, you have no recollection of me, I am sure."

The strange man was not over and above well dressed, and was very far from being fat or rich-looking in any sense of the word, yet he spoke with a kind of modest confidence, and assumed an easy, gentlemanly sort of air, to which nobody but a rich man can lawfully presume. Besides this, he interrupted the good citizen just as he had reckoned three hundred and seventy-two fat capons and was carrying them over to the next column; and as if that were not aggravation enough, the learned recorder for the city of London had only ten minutes previously gone out at that very same door, and had turned round and said, "Good night, my lord." Yes, he had said, 'my lord;'—he, a man of birth and education, of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, Barrister at Law—he who had an uncle in the House of Commons, and an aunt almost but not quite in the House of Lords (for she had married a feeble peer, and made him vote as she liked)—he, this man, this learned recorder, had said, 'my lord.' "I'll not wait till to-morrow to give you your title, my Lord Mayor," says he with a bow and a smile; "you are Lord Mayor *de facto*, if not *de jure*. Good night, my lord!"

The Lord Mayor elect thought of this, and turning to the stranger, and sternly bidding him "go out of his private counting-house," brought forward the three hundred and seventy-two fat capons, and went on with the account.

"Do you remember," said the other, stepping forward,—"*Do* you remember little Joe Toddyhigh?"

The port wine fled for a moment from the fruiterer's nose as he muttered "Joe Toddyhigh! What about Joe Toddyhigh?"

"*I* am Joe Toddyhigh," cried the visiter. "Look at me, look hard at me;—harder, harder. You know me now? you know little Joe again? What a happiness to us both, to meet the very night before your grandeur! Oh! give me your hand, Jack—both hands—both, for the sake of old times."

"You pinch me, sir. You're a hurting of me," said the Lord Mayor elect pettishly: "don't—suppose anybody should come—Mr. Toddyhigh, sir."

"Mr. Toddyhigh!" repeated the other ruefully.

"Oh! don't bother," said the Lord Mayor elect, scratching his head. "Dear me! Why, I thought you was dead. What a fellow you are!"

Indeed, it was a pretty state of things, and worthy the tone of vexation and disappointment in which the Lord Mayor spoke. Joe Toddyhigh had been a poor boy with him at Hull, and had oftentimes divided his last penny and parted his last crust to relieve his wants, for though Joe was a destitute child in those times, he was as faithful and affectionate in his friendship as ever man of might could be. They parted one day to seek their fortunes in different directions. Joe went to sea, and the now wealthy citizen begged his way to London. They separated with many tears like foolish fellows as they were, and agreed to remain fast friends, and if they lived, soon to communicate again.

When he was an errand-boy, and even in the early days of his apprenticeship, the citizen had many a time trudged to the Post-office to ask if there were any letter from poor little Joe, and had gone home again with tears in his eyes, when he found no news of his only friend. The world is a wide place, and it was a long time before the letter came; when it did, the writer was forgotten. It turned from white to yellow from lying in the Post-office with nobody to claim it, and in course of time was torn up with five hundred others, and sold for waste-paper. And now at last, and when it might least have been expected, here was this Joe Toddyhigh turning up and claiming acquaintance with a great public character, who on the morrow would be cracking jokes with the Prime Minister of England, and who had only, at any time during the next twelve months, to say the word, and he could shut up Temple Bar, and make it no thoroughfare for the king himself!

"I am sure I don't know what to say, Mr. Toddyhigh," said the Lord Mayor elect; "I really don't. It's very inconvenient. I'd sooner have given twenty pound—it's very inconvenient, really."

A thought had struggled into his mind, that perhaps his old friend might say something passionate which would give him an excuse for being angry himself. No such thing. Joe looked at him steadily, but very mildly, and did not open his lips.

"Of course I shall pay you what I owe you," said the Lord Mayor elect, fidgeting in his chair. "You lent me—I think it was a shilling or some small coin—when we parted company, and that of course I shall pay, with good interest. I can pay my way with any man, and always have done. If you look into the Mansion House the day after to-morrow—some time after dusk—and ask for my private clerk, you'll find he has a draft for you. I haven't got time to say anything more just now, unless—" he hesitated, for, coupled with a strong desire to glitter for once in all his glory in the eyes of his former companion, was a distrust of his appearance which might be more shabby than he could tell by that feeble light—"unless you'd like to come to the dinner to-morrow. I don't mind your having this ticket, if you like to take it. A great many people would give their ears for it, I can tell you."

His old friend took the card without speaking a word, and instantly departed. His sunburnt face and grey hair were present to the citizen's mind for a moment; but by the time he reached three hundred and eighty-one fat capons, he had quite forgotten him.

Joe Toddyhigh had never been in the capital of Europe before, and he wandered up and down the streets that night, amazed at the number of churches and other public buildings, the splendour of the shops, the riches that were heaped up on every side, the glare of light in which they were displayed, and the concourse of people who hurried to and fro, indifferent apparently to all the wonders that surrounded them. But in all the long streets and broad squares, there were none but strangers; it was quite a relief to turn down a byway and hear his own footsteps on the pavement. He went home to his inn; thought that London was a dreary, desolate place, and felt disposed to doubt the existence of one

true-hearted man in the whole worshipful company of Patten-makers. Finally, he went to bed, and dreamed that he and the Lord Mayor elect were boys again.

He went next day to the dinner, and when, in a burst of light and music, and in the midst of splendid decorations and surrounded by brilliant company, his former friend appeared at the head of the Hall, and was hailed with shouts and cheering, he cheered and shouted with the best, and for the moment could have cried. The next moment he cursed his weakness in behalf of a man so changed and selfish, and quite hated a jolly-looking old gentleman opposite for declaring himself, in the pride of his heart, a Patten-maker.

As the banquet proceeded, he took more and more to heart the rich citizen's unkindness,—and that, not from any envy, but because he felt that a man of his state and fortune could all the better afford to recognise an old friend, even if he were poor and obscure. The more he thought of this, the more lonely and sad he felt. When the company dispersed and adjourned to the ball-room, he paced the hall and passages alone, ruminating in a very melancholy condition upon the disappointment he had experienced.

It chanced, while he was lounging about in this moody state, that he stumbled upon a flight of stairs, dark, steep, and narrow, which he ascended without any thought about the matter, and so came into a little music-gallery, empty and deserted. From this elevated post, which commanded the whole hall, he amused himself in looking down upon the attendants, who were clearing away the fragments of the feast very lazily, and drinking out of all the bottles and glasses with most commendable perseverance.

His attention gradually relaxed, and he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke, he thought there must be something the matter with his eyes; but, rubbing them a little, he soon found that the moonlight was really streaming through the east window, that the lamps were all extinguished, and that he was alone. He listened, but no distant murmur in the echoing passages, not even the shutting of a door, broke the deep silence; he groped his way down the stairs, and found that the door at the bottom was locked on the other side. He began now to comprehend that he must have slept a long time, that he had been overlooked, and was shut up there for the night.

His first sensation, perhaps, was not altogether a comfortable one, for it was a dark, chilly, earthy-smelling place, and something too large for a man so situated, to feel at home in. However, when the momentary consternation of his surprise was over, he made light of the accident, and resolved to feel his way up the stairs again, and make himself as comfortable as he could in the gallery until morning. As he turned to execute this purpose, he heard the clocks strike three.

Any such invasion of a dead stillness as the striking of distant clocks, causes it to appear the more intense and insupportable when the sound has ceased. He listened with strained attention in the hope that some clock, lagging behind its fellows, had yet to strike—looking all the time into the profound darkness before him until it seemed to weave itself into a black tissue, patterned with a hundred reflections of his own eyes. But the bells had all pealed out their warning for that once, and the gust of wind that moaned through the place seemed cold and heavy with their iron breath.

The time and circumstances were favourable to reflection. He tried to keep his thoughts to the current, unpleasant though it was, in which they had moved all day, and to think with what a romantic feeling he had looked forward to shaking his old friend by the hand before he died, and what a wide and cruel difference there was between the meeting they had had, and that which he had so often and so long anticipated. Still he was disordered by waking to such sudden loneliness, and could not prevent his mind from running upon odd tales of people of undoubted courage, who, being shut up by night in vaults or churches, or other dismal places, had scaled great heights to get out, and fled from silence as they had never done from danger. This brought to his mind the moonlight through the window, and bethinking himself of it, he groped his way back up the crooked stairs — but very stealthily, as though he were fearful of being overheard.

He was very much astonished when he approached the gallery again, to see a light in the building: still more so, on advancing hastily and looking round, to observe no visible source from which it could proceed. But how much greater yet was his astonishment at the spectacle which this light revealed!

The statues of the two giants, Gog and Magog, each above fourteen feet in height, those which succeeded to still older and more barbarous figures after the Great Fire of London, and which stand in the Guildhall to this day, were endowed with life and motion. These guardian genii of the City had quitted their pedestals, and reclined in easy attitudes in the great stained glass window. Between them was an ancient cask, which seemed to be full of

wine; for the younger Giant, clapping his huge hand upon it, and throwing up his mighty leg, burst into an exulting laugh, which reverberated through the hall like thunder.

Joe Toddyhigh instinctively stooped down, and, more dead than alive, felt his hair stand on end, his knees knock together, and a cold damp break out upon his forehead. But even at that minute curiosity prevailed over every other feeling, and somewhat reassured by the good-humour of the Giants and their apparent unconsciousness of his presence, he crouched in a corner of the gallery, in as small a space as he could, and peeping between the rails, observed them closely.

FIRST NIGHT OF THE GIANT CHRONICLES.

Turning towards his companion, the elder Giant uttered these words in a grave majestic tone:—

"Magog, does boisterous mirth beseem the Giant Warder of this ancient city? Is this becoming demeanour for a watchful spirit over whose bodiless head so many years have rolled, so many changes swept like empty air—in whose impalpable nostrils the scent of blood and crime, pestilence, cruelty and horror, has been familiar as breath to mortals—in whose sight Time has gathered in the harvest of centuries, and garnered so many crops of human pride, affections, hopes, and sorrows? Bethink you of our compact. The night wanes; feasting, revelry and music have encroached upon our usual hours of solitude, and morning will be here apace. Ere we are stricken mute again, bethink you of our compact."

Pronouncing these latter words with

more of impatience than quite accorded with his apparent age and gravity, the Giant raised a long pole (which he still bears in his hand) and tapped his brother Giant rather smartly on the head; indeed the blow was so smartly administered, that the latter quickly withdrew his lips from the cask to which they had been applied, and catching up his shield and halbert assumed an attitude of defence. His irritation was but momentary, for he laid these weapons aside as hastily as he had assumed them, and said as he did so:—

"You know, Gog, old friend, that when we animate these shapes which the Londoners of old assigned (and not unworthily) to the guardian genii of their city, we are susceptible of some of the sensations which belong to human kind. Thus when I taste wine, I feel blows; when I relish the one, I disrelish the other. Therefore, Gog, the more especially as your arm is none of the lightest, keep your good staff by your side, else we may chance to differ. Peace be between us."

"Amen!" said the other, leaning his staff in the window-corner; "why did you laugh just now;"—

"To think" replied the Giant Magog, laying his hand upon the cask, "of him who owned this wine, and kept it in the cellar hoarded from the light of day, for thirty years, 'till it should be fit to drink,' quoth he. He was two score and ten years old when he buried it beneath his house, and yet never thought that he might be scarcely 'fit to drink' when the wine became so. I wonder it never occurred to him to make himself unfit to be eaten. There is very little of him left by this time."—

"The night is waning," said Gog mournfully.

"I know it," replied his companion, "and I see you are impatient. But look. Through the eastern window placed opposite to us, that the first beams of the rising sun may every morning gild our giant faces—the moon-rays fall upon the pavement in a stream of light that to my fancy sinks through the cold stone and gushes into the old crypt below. The night is scarcely past its noon, and our great charge is sleeping heavily."

They ceased to speak, and looked upward at the moon. The sight of their large black rolling eyes filled Joe Toddyhigh with such horror that he could scarcely draw his breath. Still they took no note of him, and appeared to believe themselves quite alone.

"Our compact," said Magog after a pause, "is, if I understand it, that, instead of watching here in silence through the dreary nights, we entertain each other with stories of our past experience,—with tales of the past, the present, and the future,—with legends of London and her sturdy citizens from the old simple times. That every night at midnight when Saint Paul's bell tolls out one and we may move and speak, we thus discourse, nor leave such themes till the first grey gleam of day shall strike us dumb. Is that our bargain, brother?"

"Yes," said the Giant Gog, "that is the league between us who guard this city, by day in spirit, and by night in body also; and never on ancient holidays have its conduits run wine more merrily than we will pour forth our legendary lore. We are old chroniclers from this time hence. The crumbled walls encircle us once more, the postern-gates are closed, the drawbridge is up, and pent in its narrow den beneath, the water foams and struggles with the sunken starlings. Jerkins and quarter-staves are in the streets again, the nightly watch is set, the rebel, sad and lonely in his Tower dungeon, tries to sleep and weeps for home and children. Aloft upon the gates and walls are noble heads, glaring fiercely down upon the dreaming city, and vexing the hungry dogs that scent them in the air and tear the ground beneath with dismal howlings. The axe, the block, the rack, in their dark chambers give signs of recent use. The Thames floating past long lines of cheerful windows whence come a burst of music and a stream of light, bears sullenly to the Palace wall the last red stain brought on the tide from Traitor's-gate. But your pardon, brother. The night wears, and I am talking idly."

The other Giant appeared to be entirely of this opinion, for during the foregoing rhapsody of his fellow-sentinel he had been scratching his head with an air of comical uneasiness, or rather with an air that would have been very comical if he had been a dwarf or an ordinary-sized man. He winked too, and though it could not be doubted for a moment that he winked to himself, still he certainly cocked his enormous eye towards the gallery where the listener was concealed. Nor was this all, for he gaped; and when he gaped, Joe was horribly reminded of the popular prejudice on the subject of giants, and of their fabled power of smelling out Englishmen, however closely concealed.

His alarm was such that he nearly swooned, and it was some little time before his power of sight or hearing was restored. When he recovered he found that the elder Giant was pressing the younger to commence the Chronicles, and that the latter was endeavouring to excuse himself, on the

ground that the night was far spent and it would be better to wait until the next. Well assured by this that he was certainly about to begin directly, the listener collected his faculties by a great effort, and distinctly heard Magog express himself to the following effect:—

In the sixteenth century and in the reign of Queen Elizabeth of glorious memory (albeit many of her golden days are rusted with blood) there lived in the city of London a bold young 'prentice who loved his master's daughter. There were no doubt within the walls a great many young 'prentices in this condition, but I speak of only one, and his name was Hugh Graham.

This Hugh was apprenticed to an honest Bowyer who dwelt in the ward of Cheype and was rumoured to possess great wealth. Rumour was quite as infallible in those days as at the present time, but it happened then as now, to be sometimes right by accident. It stumbled upon the truth when it gave the old Bowyer a mint of money. His trade had been a profitable one in the time of King Henry the Eighth, who encouraged English archery to the utmost, and he had been prudent and discreet. Thus it came to pass that Mistress Alice his only daughter was the richest heiress in all his wealthy ward. Young Hugh had often maintained with staff and cudgel that she was the handsomest. To do him justice, I believe she was.

If he could have gained the heart of pretty Mistress Alice by knocking this conviction into stubborn people's heads, Hugh would have had no cause to fear. But though the Bowyer's daughter smiled in secret to hear of his doughty deeds for her sake, and though her little waiting-woman reported all her smiles (and many more) to Hugh, and though he was at a vast expense in kisses and small coin to recompense her fidelity, he made no progress in his love. He durst not whisper it to Mistress Alice save on sure encouragement, and that she never gave him. A glance of her dark eye as she sat at the door on a summer's evening after prayer time, while he and the neighbouring 'prentices exercised themselves in the street with blunted sword and buckler, would fire Hugh's blood so that none could stand before him; but then she glanced at others quite as kindly as on him, and where was the use of cracking crowns if Mistress Alice smiled upon the cracked as well as on the cracker?

Still Hugh went on, and loved her more and more. He thought of her all day, and dreamed of her all night long. He treasured up her every word and gesture, and had a palpitation of the heart whenever he heard her footstep on the stairs or her voice in an adjoining room. To him, the old Bowyer's house was haunted by an angel; there was enchantment in the air and space in which she moved. It would have been no miracle to Hugh if flowers had sprung from the rush-strewn floors beneath the tread of lovely Mistress Alice.

Never did 'prentice long to distinguish himself in the eyes of his lady-love so ardently as Hugh. Sometimes he pictured to himself the house taking fire by night, and he, when all drew back in fear, rushing through flame and smoke and bearing her from the ruins in his arms. At other times he thought of a rising of fierce rebels, an attack upon the city, a strong assault upon the Bowyer's house in particular, and he falling on the threshold pierced with numberless wounds in defence of Mistress Alice. If he could only enact some prodigy of valour, do some wonderful deed and let her know that she had inspired it, he thought he could die contented.

Sometimes the Bowyer and his daughter would go out to supper with a worthy citizen at the fashionable hour of six o'clock, and on such occasions Hugh wearing his blue 'prentice cloak as gallantly as 'prentice might, would attend with a lantern and his trusty club to escort them home. These were the brightest moments of his life. To hold the light while Mistress Alice picked her steps, to touch her hand as he helped her over broken ways, to have her leaning on his arm—it sometimes even came to that—this was happiness indeed!

When the nights were fair, Hugh followed in the rear, his eyes riveted on the graceful figure of the Bowyer's daughter as she and the old man moved on before him. So they threaded the narrow winding streets of the city, now passing beneath the overhanging gables of old wooden houses whence creaking signs projected into the street, and now emerging from some dark and frowning gateway into the clear moonlight. At such times, or when the shouts of straggling brawlers met her ear, the Bowyer's daughter would look timidly back at Hugh beseeching him to draw nearer; and then how he grasped his club and longed to do battle with a dozen rufflers, for the love of Mistress Alice!

The old Bowyer was in the habit of lending money on interest to the gallants of the Court, and thus it happened that many a richly-dressed gentleman dismounted at his door. More waving plumes and gallant steeds, indeed, were seen at the Bowyer's house, and more embroidered silks and velvets sparkled in his dark shop and darker private closet than at any merchant's in the city. In those times no less than in

the present it would seem that the richest-looking cavaliers often wanted money the most.

Of these glittering clients there was one who always came alone. He was always nobly mounted, and having no attendant gave his horse in charge to Hugh while he and the Bowyer were closeted within. Once as he sprung into the saddle Mistress Alice was seated at an upper window, and before she could withdraw he had doffed his jewelled cap and kissed his hand. Hugh watched him caracoling down the street, and burnt with indignation. But how much deeper was the glow that reddened in his cheeks when raising his eyes to the casement he saw that Alice watched the stranger too!

He came again and often, each time arrayed more gaily than before, and still the little casement showed him Mistress Alice. At length one heavy day, she fled from home. It had cost her a hard struggle, for all her old father's gifts were strewn about her chamber as if she had parted from them one by one and knew that the time must come when these tokens of his love would wring her heart—yet she was gone.

She left a letter commending her poor father to the care of Hugh, and wishing he might be happier than he could ever have been with her, for he deserved the love of a better and a purer heart than she had to bestow. The old man's forgiveness (she said) she had no power to ask, but she prayed God to bless him — and so ended with a blot upon the paper where her tears had fallen.

At first the old man's wrath was kindled, and he carried his wrong to the Queen's throne itself; but there was no redress he learnt at Court, for his daughter had been conveyed abroad. This afterwards appeared to be the truth, as there came from France, after an interval of several years, a letter in her hand. It was written in trembling characters, and almost illegible. Little could be made out save that she often thought of home and her old dear pleasant room—and that she had dreamt her father was dead and had not blessed her — and that her heart was breaking.

The poor old Bowyer lingered on, never suffering Hugh to quit his sight, for he knew now that he had loved his daughter and that was the only link that bound him to earth. It broke at length, and he died bequeathing his old 'prentice his trade and all his wealth, and solemnly charging him, with his last breath to revenge his child if ever he who had worked her misery crossed his path in life again.

From the time of Alice's flight, the tilling-ground, the fields, the fencing-school, the summer evening sports, knew Hugh no more. His spirit was dead within him. He rose to great eminence and repute among the citizens, but he was never seen to smile, and never mingled in their revelries or rejoicings. Brave, humane, and generous, he was loved by all. He was pitied too by those who knew his story; and these were so many, that when he walked along the streets alone at dusk, even the rude common people doffed their caps, and mingled a rough air of sympathy with their respect.

One night in May — it was her birthnight, and twenty years since she had left her home—Hugh Graham sat in the room she had hallowed in his boyish days. He was now a grey-haired man, though still in the prime of life. Old thoughts had borne him company for many hours, and the chamber had gradually got quite dark, when he was roused by a low knocking at the outer door.

He hastened down, and, opening it, saw by the light of a lamp which he had seized in the way, a female figure crouching in the portal. It hurried swiftly past him, and glided up the stairs. He looked out for pursuers. There were none in sight.

He was inclined to think it a vision of his own brain when suddenly a vague suspicion of the truth flashed upon his mind. He barred the door and hastened wildly back. Yes, there she was—there, in the chamber he had quitted,—there in her old innocent happy home, so changed that none but he could trace one gleam of what she had been—there upon her knees—with her hands clasped in agony and shame before her burning face.

"My God, my God!" she cried, "now strike me dead! Though I have brought death and shame and sorrow on this roof, oh, let me die at home in mercy!"

There was no tear upon her face then, but she trembled and glanced round the chamber. Everything was in its old place. Her bed looked as if she had risen from it but that morning. The sight of these familiar objects marking the dear remembrance in which she had been held, and the blight she had brought upon herself was more than the woman's better nature that had carried her there, could bear. She wept and fell upon the ground.

A rumour was spread about, in a few days' time, that the Bowyer's cruel daughter had come home, and that Master Hugh Graham had given her lodging in his house. It was rumoured too that he had resigned her fortune, in order that she might bestow it in acts of charity, and that he had vowed to guard her in her solitude, but that they were never to see each other more. These rumours greatly incensed all virtuous wives and daughters in the ward, especially when they appeared to receive some corroboration from the circumstance of Master Graham taking up his abode in another tenement hard by. The estimation in which he was held, however, forbade any questioning on the subject, and as the Bowyer's house was close shut up, and nobody came forth when public shows and festivities were in progress, or to flaunt in the public walks, or to buy new fashions at the mercers' booths, all the well-conducted females agreed among themselves that there could be no woman there.

These reports had scarcely died away when the wonder of every good citizen male and female, was utterly absorbed and swallowed up by a Royal Proclamation, in which her Majesty, strongly censuring the practice of wearing long Spanish rapiers of preposterous length (as being a bullying and swaggering custom, tending to bloodshed and public disorder) commanded that on a particular day therein named, certain grave citizens should repair to the city gates, and there, in public, break all rapiers worn or carried by persons claiming admission, that exceeded, though it were only by a quarter of an inch, three standard feet in length.

Royal Proclamations usually take their course, let the public wonder never so much. On the appointed day two citizens of high repute took up their stations at each of the gates, attended by a party of the city guard: the main body to enforce the Queen's will, and take custody of all such rebels (if any) as might have the temerity to dispute it: and a few to bear the standard measures and instruments for reducing all unlawful sword-blades to the prescribed dimensions. In pursuance of these arrangements, Master Graham and another were posted at Lud Gate, on the hill before Saint Paul's.

A pretty numerous company were gathered together at this spot, for, besides the officers in attendance to enforce the proclamation, there was a motley crowd of lookers-on of various degrees, who raised from time to time such shouts and cries as the circumstances called forth. A spruce young courtier was the first who approached; he unsheathed a weapon of burnished steel that shone and glistened in the sun, and handed it with the newest air to the officer, who, finding it exactly three feet long, returned it with a bow. Thereupon the gallant raised his hat and crying "God save the Queen," passed on amidst the plaudits of the mob. Then came another

—a better courtier still—who wore a blade but two feet long, whereat the people laughed, much to the disparagement of his honour's dignity. Then came a third, a sturdy old officer of the army, girded with a rapier at least a foot and a half beyond her Majesty's pleasure; at him they raised a great shout and most of the spectators (but especially those who were armourers or cutlers) laughed very heartily at the breakage which would ensue. But they were disappointed, for the old campaigner, coolly unbuckling his sword and bidding his servant carry it home again, passed through unarmed, to the great indignation of all the spectators. They relieved themselves in some degree by hooting a tall blustering fellow with a prodigious weapon, who stopped short on coming in sight of the preparations, and after a little consideration turned back again; but all this time no rapier had been broken although it was high noon, and all cavaliers of any quality or appearance were taking their way towards Saint Paul's churchyard.

During these proceedings Master Graham had stood apart, strictly confining himself to the duty imposed upon him, and taking little heed of anything beyond. He stepped forward now as a richly dressed gentleman on foot, followed by a single attendant, was seen advancing up the hill.

As this person drew nearer, the crowd stopped their clamour and bent forward with eager looks. Master Graham standing alone in the gateway, and the stranger coming slowly towards him, they seemed, as it were, set face to face. The nobleman (for he looked one) had a haughty and disdainful air, which bespoke the slight estimation in which he held the citizen. The citizen on the other hand preserved the resolute bearing of one who was not to be frowned down or daunted, and who cared very little for any nobility but that of worth and manhood. It was perhaps some consciousness on the part of each, of these feelings in the other, that infused a more stern expression into their regards as they came closer together.

"Your rapier, worthy Sir!"

At the instant that he pronounced these words Graham started, and falling back some paces, laid his hand upon the dagger in his belt.

"You are the man whose horse I used to hold before the Bowyer's door! You are that man! Speak!"

"Out, you 'prentice hound!" said the other.

"You are he! I know you well!" cried Graham. "Let no man step between us two, or I shall be his murderer." With that he drew his dagger and rushed in upon him.

The stranger had drawn his weapon from the scabbard ready for the scrutiny, before a word was spoken. He made a thrust at his assailant, but the dagger which Graham clutched in his left hand being the dirk in use at that time for parrying such blows promptly turned the point aside. They closed. The dagger fell rattling upon the ground, and Graham wresting his adversary's sword from his grasp, plunged it through his heart. As he drew it out it snapped in two, leaving a fragment in the dead man's body.

All this passed so swiftly that the bystanders looked on without an effort to interfere; but the man was no sooner down than an uproar broke forth which rent the air. The attendant rushing through the gate proclaimed that his master, a nobleman, had been set upon and slain by a citizen; the word quickly spread from mouth to mouth; Saint Paul's cathedral and every book-shop, ordinary, and smoking-house in the churchyard poured out its stream of cavaliers and their followers, who, mingling together in a dense tumultuous body, struggled, sword in hand, towards the spot.

With equal impetuosity and stimulating each other by loud cries and shouts, the citizens and common people took up the quarrel on their side, and encircling Master Graham a hundred deep, forced him from the gate. In vain he waved the broken sword above his head, crying that he would die on London's threshold for their sacred homes. They bore him on, and ever keeping him in the midst so that no man could attack him, fought their way into the city.

The clash of swords and roar of voices, the dust and heat and pressure, the trampling under foot of men, the distracted looks and shrieks of women at the windows above as they recognised their relatives or lovers in the crowd, the rapid tolling of alarm bells, the furious rage and passion of the scene were fearful. Those who being on the outskirts of each crowd could use their weapons with effect fought desperately, while those behind maddened with baffled rage struck at each other over the heads of those before them, and crushed their own fellows. Wherever the broken sword was seen above the people's heads, towards that spot the cavaliers made a new rush. Every one of these charges was marked by sudden gaps in the throng where men were trodden down, but as fast as they were made, the tide swept over them and still the multitude pressed on again, a confused mass of swords, clubs, staves, broken plumes, fragments of rich cloaks and doub-

lets, and angry bleeding faces, all mixed up together in inextricable disorder.

The design of the people was to force Master Graham to take refuge in his dwelling, and to defend it until the authorities could interfere or they could gain time for parley. But either from ignorance, or in the confusion of the moment, they stopped at his old house which was closely shut. Some time was lost in beating the doors open and passing him to the front. About a score of the boldest of the other party threw themselves into the torrent while this was being done, and reaching the door at the same moment with himself, cut him off from his defenders.

"I never will turn in such a righteous cause, so help me Heaven!" cried Graham in a voice that at last made itself heard, and confronting them as he spoke. "Least of all will I turn upon this threshold which owes its desolation to such men as ye. I give no quarter, and I will have none! Strike!"

For a moment they stood at bay. At that moment a shot from an unseen hand—apparently fired by some person who had gained access to one of the opposite houses,—struck Graham in the brain and he fell dead. A wail was heard in the air; many people in the concourse cried that they had seen a spirit glide across the little casement window of the Bowyer's house.

A dead silence succeeded. After a short time some of the flushed and heated throng lay down their arms and softly carried the body within doors. Others fell off or slunk away in knots of two or three, others whispered together in groups, and before a numerous guard, which then rode up, could muster in the street, it was nearly empty.

Those who carried Master Graham to the bed up-stairs were shocked to see a woman lying beneath the window with her hands clasped together. After trying to recover her in vain, they laid her near the citizen, who still retained, tightly grasped in his right hand, the first and last sword that was broken that day at Lud Gate.

The Giant uttered these concluding words with sudden precipitation, and on the instant the strange light which had filled the hall, faded away. Joe glanced involuntarily at the eastern window and saw the first pale gleam of morning. He turned his head again towards the other window in which the Giants had been seated. It was empty. The cask of wine was gone, and he could dimly make out that the two great figures stood mute and motionless upon their pedestals.

After rubbing his eyes and wondering for full half an hour, during which time he observed morning come creeping on, he yielded to the drowsiness which overpowered him and fell into a refreshing slumber. When he awoke it was broad day; the building was open, and workmen were busily engaged in removing the vestiges of last night's feast.

Stealing gently down the little stairs, and assuming the air of some early lounger who had dropped in from the street, he walked up to the foot of each pedestal in turn, and attentively examined the figure it supported. There could be no doubt about the features of either; he recollected the exact expression they had worn at different passages of their conversation, and recognized in every line and lineament the Giants of the night. Assured that it was no vision but that he had heard and seen with his own proper senses, he walked forth, determining at all hazards to conceal himself in the Guildhall again that evening. He further resolved to sleep all day, so that he might be very wakeful and vigilant, and above all that he might take notice of the figures at the precise moment of their becoming animated and subsiding into their old state, which he greatly reproached himself for not having done already.

CORRESPONDENCE.

TO MASTER HUMPHREY.

"SIR,

"Before you proceed any further in your account of your friends and what you say and do when you meet together, excuse me if I proffer my claim to be elected to one of the vacant chairs in that old room of yours. Don't reject me without full consideration for if you do you'll be sorry for it afterwards—you will upon my life.

"I inclose my card, sir, in this letter. I never was ashamed of my name, and I never shall be. I am considered a devilish gentlemanly fellow, and I act up to the character. If you want a reference, ask any of the men at our club. Ask any fellow who goes there to write his letters, what sort of conversation mine is. Ask him if he thinks I have the sort of voice that will suit your deaf friend and make him hear if he can hear anything at all. Ask the servants what they think of me. There's not a rascal among 'em sir, but will tremble to hear my name. That reminds me—don't you say too much about that housekeeper of yours; it's a low subject, damned low.

"I tell you what, sir. If you vote me into one of those empty chairs, you'll have among you a man with a fund of gentlemanly information that'll rather astonish you. I can let you into a few anecdotes about some fine women of title, that are quite high life, sir—the tip-top sort of thing I know the name of every man who has been out on an affair of honour within the last five-and-twenty years; I know the private particulars of every cross and squabble that has taken place upon the turf, at the gaming-table or elsewhere, during the whole of that time. I have been called the gentlemanly chronicle. You may consider yourself a lucky dog; upon my soul you may congratulate yourself, though I say so.

"It's an uncommon good notion that of yours, not letting anybody know where you live. I have tried it, but there has always been an anxiety respecting me which has found me out. Your deaf friend is a cunning fellow to keep his name so close. I have tried that too, but have always failed. I shall be proud to make his acquaintance—tell him so, with my compliments.

"You must have been a queer fellow when you were a child, confounded queer. It's odd all that about the picture in your first paper,—prosy, but told in a devilish gentlemanly sort of way. In places like that, I could come in with great effect with a touch of life—Don't you feel that?

"I am anxiously waiting for your next paper to know whether your friends live upon the premises, and at your expense, which I take it for granted is the case. If I am right in this impression I know a charming fellow (an excellent companion and most delightful company) who will be proud to join you. Some years ago he seconded a great many prize-fighters and once fought an amateur match himself; since then, he has driven several mails, broken at different periods all the lamps on the right-hand side of Oxford-street, and six times carried away every bell-handle in Bloomsbury-square, besides turning off the gas in various thoroughfares. In point of gentlemanliness he is unrivalled, and I should say that next to myself he is of all men the best suited to your purpose.

"Expecting your reply,

"I am,

"&c. &c."

Master Humphrey informs this gentleman that his application, both as it concerns himself and his friend, is rejected.

MASTER HUMPHREY FROM HIS CLOCK-SIDE IN THE CHIMNEY-CORNER.

My old companion tells me it is midnight. The fire glows brightly, crackling with a sharp and cheerful sound as if it loved to burn. The merry cricket on the hearth (my constant visiter) this ruddy blaze, my clock, and I, seem to share the world among us, and to be the only things awake. The wind, high and boisterous but now, has died away and hoarsely mutters in its sleep. I love all times and seasons each in its turn, and am apt perhaps to think the present one the best, but past or coming I always love this peaceful time of night, when long buried thoughts favoured by the gloom and silence steal from their graves and haunt the scenes of faded happiness and hope.

The popular faith in ghosts has a remarkable affinity with the whole current of our thoughts at such an hour as this, and seems to be their necessary and natural consequence. For who can wonder that man should feel a vague belief in tales of disembodied spirits wandering through those places which they once dearly affected, when he himself, scarcely less separated from his old world than they, is for ever lingering upon past emotions and by-gone times, and hovering, the ghost of his former self, about the places and people that warmed his heart of old? It is thus that I prowl around my buried treasure (though not of gold or silver) and mourn my loss; it is thus that I revisit the ashes of extinguished fires, and take my silent stand at old bedsides. If my spirit should ever glide back to this chamber when my body is mingled with the dust, it will but follow the course it often took in the old man's lifetime and add but one more change to the subjects of its contemplation.

In all my idle speculations I am greatly assisted by various legends connected with my venerable house, which are current in the neighbourhood, and are so numerous that there is scarce a cupboard or corner that has not some dismal story of its own. When I first entertained thoughts of becoming its tenant I was assured that it was haunted from roof to cellar, and I believe the bad opinion in which my neighbours once held me had its rise in my no

being torn to pieces or at least distracted with terror on the night I took possession: in either of which cases I should doubtless have arrived by a short cut at the very summit of popularity.

But traditions and rumours all taken into account, who so abets me in every fancy and chimes with my every thought, as my dear deaf friend; and how often have I cause to bless the day that brought us two together! Of all days in the year I rejoice to think that it should have been Christmas Day, with which from childhood we associate something friendly, hearty, and sincere.

I had walked out to cheer myself with the happiness of others, and in the little tokens of festivity and rejoicing of which the streets and houses present so many on that day, had lost some hours. Now I stopped to look at a merry party hurrying through the snow on foot to their place of meeting, and now turned back to see a whole coachful of children safely deposited at the welcome house. At one time, I admired how carefully the working man carried the baby in its gaudy hat and feathers, and how his wife, trudging patiently on behind, forgot even her care of her gay clothes, in exchanging greetings with the child as it crowed and laughed over the father's shoulder; at another, I pleased myself with some passing scene of gallantry or courtship, and was glad to believe that for a season half the world of poverty was gay.

As the day closed in, I still rambled through the streets, feeling a companionship in the bright fires that cast their warm reflection on the windows as I passed, and losing all sense of my own loneliness in imagining the sociality and kind-fellowship that everywhere prevailed. At length I happened to stop before a Tavern, and encountering a Bill of Fare in the window, it all at once brought it into my head to wonder what kind of people dined alone in Taverns upon Christmas Day.

Solitary men are accustomed, I suppose, unconsciously to look upon solitude as their own peculiar property. I had sat alone in my room on many, many, anniversaries of this great holiday, and had never regarded it but as one of universal assemblage and rejoicing. I had excepted, and with an aching heart, a crowd of prisoners and beggars, but *these* were not the men for whom the Tavern doors were open. Had they any customers, or was it a mere form? a form, no doubt.

Trying to feel quite sure of this I walked away, but before I had gone many paces, I stopped and looked back. There was a provoking air of business in the lamp above the door, which I could not overcome. I began to be afraid there might be many customers—young men perhaps struggling with the world, utter strangers in this great place, whose friends lived at a long distance off, and whose means were too slender to enable them to make the journey. The supposition gave rise to so many distressing little pictures that in preference to carrying them home with me, I determined to encounter the realities. So I turned, and walked in.

I was at once glad and sorry to find that there was only one person in the dining-room; glad to know there were not more, and sorry to think he should be there by himself. He did not look so old as I, but like me he was advanced in life, and his hair was nearly white. Though I made more noise in entering and seating myself than was quite necessary, with the view of attracting his attention and saluting him in the good old form of that time of year, he did not raise his head but sat with it resting on his hand, musing over his half-finished meal.

I called for something which would give me an excuse for remaining in the room (I had dined early as my housekeeper was engaged at night to partake of some friend's good cheer) and sat where I could observe without intruding on him. After a time he looked up. He was aware that somebody had entered, but could see very little of me as I sat in the shade and he in the light. He was sad and thoughtful, and I forbore to trouble him by speaking.

Let me believe that it was something better than curiosity which riveted my attention and impelled me strongly towards this gentleman. I never saw so patient and kind a face. He should have been surrounded by friends, and yet here he sat dejected and alone when all men had their friends about them. As often as he roused himself from his reverie he would fall into it again, and it was plain that whatever were the subject of his thoughts they were of a melancholy kind, and would not be controlled.

He was not used to solitude. I was sure of that, for I know by myself that if he had been, his manner would have been different and he would have taken some slight interest in the arrival of another. I could not fail to mark that he had no appetite—that he tried to eat in vain—that time after time the plate was pushed away, and he relapsed into his former posture.

His mind was wandering among old Christmas Days, I thought. Many of them sprung up together, not with a long gap between each but in unbroken succession like days of the week. It was a great change to find himself for the first time

(I quite settled that it *was* the first) in an empty silent room with no soul to care for. I could not help following him in imagination through crowds of pleasant faces, and then coming back to that dull place with its bough of misletoe sickening in the gas, and sprigs of holly parched up already by a Simoom of roast and boiled. The very waiter had gone home, and his representative, a poor lean hungry man, was keeping Christmas in his jacket.

I grew still more interested in my friend. His dinner done, a decanter of wine was placed before him. It remained untouched for a long time, but at length with a quivering hand he filled a glass and raised it to his lips. Some tender wish to which he had been accustomed to give utterance on that day, or some beloved name that he had been used to pledge, trembled upon them at the moment. He put it down very hastily—took it up once more—again put it down—pressed his hand upon his face—yes—and tears stole down his cheeks, I am certain.

Without pausing to consider whether I did right or wrong, I stepped across the room, and sitting down beside him laid my hand gently on his arm.

"My friend," I said, "forgive me if I beseech you to take comfort and consolation from the lips of an old man. I will not preach to you what I have not practised, indeed. Whatever be your grief, be of a good heart—be of a good heart, pray!"

"I see that you speak earnestly," he replied, "and kindly I am very sure, but—"

I nodded my head to show that I understood what he would say, for I had already gathered from a certain fixed expression in his face and from the attention with which he watched me while I spoke, that his sense of hearing was destroyed. "There should be a freemasonry between us," said I, pointing from himself to me to explain my meaning—"if not in our grey hairs, at least in our misfortunes. You see that I am but a poor cripple."

I never felt so happy under my affliction since the trying moment of my first becoming conscious of it, as when he took my hand in his with a smile that has lighted my path in life from that day, and we sat down side by side.

This was the beginning of my friendship with the deaf gentleman, and when was ever the slight and easy service of a kind word in season, repaid by such attachment and devotion as he has shown to me!

He produced a little set of tablets and a pencil to facilitate our conversation, on that our first acquaintance, and I well remember how awkward and constrained I was in writing down my share of the dialogue, and how easily he guessed my meaning before I had written half of what I had to say. He told me in a faltering voice that he had not been accustomed to be alone on that day—that it had always been a little festival with him—and seeing that I glanced at his dress in the expectation that he wore mourning, he added hastily that it was not that; if it had been, he thought he could have borne it better. From that time to the present we have never touched upon this theme. Upon every return of the same day we have been together, and although we make it our annual custom to drink to each other hand in hand after dinner, and to recal with affectionate garrulity every circumstance of our first meeting, we always avoid this one as if by mutual consent.

Meantime we have gone on strengthening in our friendship and regard, and forming an attachment which, I trust and believe, will only be interrupted by death, to be renewed in another existence. I scarcely know how we communicate as we do, but he has long since ceased to be deaf to me. He is frequently the companion of my walks, and even in crowded streets replies to my slightest look or gesture as though he could read my thoughts. From the vast number of objects which pass in rapid succession before our eyes, we frequently select the same for some particular notice or remark, and when one of these little coincidences occurs I cannot describe the pleasure that animates my friend, or the beaming countenance he will preserve for half an hour afterwards at least.

He is a great thinker from living so much within himself, and having a lively imagination has a facility of conceiving and enlarging upon odd ideas which renders him invaluable to our little body, and greatly astonishes our two friends. His powers in this respect, are much assisted by a large pipe which he assures us once belonged to a German Student. Be this as it may, it has undoubtedly a very ancient and mysterious appearance, and is of such capacity that it takes three hours and a half to smoke it out. I have reason to believe that my barber, who is the chief authority of a knot of gossips who congregate every evening at a small tobacconist's hard by, has related anecdotes of this pipe and the grim figures that are carved upon its bowl at which all the smokers in the neighbourhood have stood aghast, and I know that my housekeeper while she holds it in high veneration, has a superstitious feeling connected with it which would render her exceedingly unwilling to be left alone in its company after dark.

Whatever sorrow my deaf friend has

known, and whatever grief may linger in some secret corner of his heart, he is now a cheerful, placid, happy creature. Misfortune can never have fallen upon such a man but for some good purpose, and when I see its traces in his gentle nature and his earnest feeling, I am the less disposed to murmur at such trials as I may have undergone myself. With regard to the pipe, I have a theory of my own; I cannot help thinking that it is in some manner connected with the event that brought us together, for I remember that it was a long time before he even talked about it; that when he did, he grew reserved and melancholy; and that it was a long time yet before he brought it forth. I have no curiosity, however, on this subject, for I know that it promotes his tranquillity and comfort, and I need no other inducement to regard it with my utmost favour.

Such is the deaf gentleman. I can call up his figure now, clad in sober grey, and seated in the chimney corner. As he puffs out the smoke from his favourite pipe he casts a look on me brimful of cordiality and friendship, and says all manner of kind and genial things in a cheerful smile; then he raises his eyes to my clock which is just about to strike, and glancing from it to me and back again, seems to divide his heart between us. For myself, it is not too much to say that I would gladly part with one of my poor limbs, could he but hear the old clock's voice.

Of our two friends, the first has been all his life one of that easy wayward truant class whom the world is accustomed to designate as nobody's enemies but their own. Bred to a profession for which he never qualified himself, and reared in the expectation of a fortune he has never inherited, he has undergone every vicissitude of which such an existence is capable. He and his younger brother, both orphans from their childhood, were educated by a wealthy relative who taught them to expect an equal division of his property; but too indolent to court, and too honest to flatter, the elder gradually lost ground in the affections of a capricious old man, and the younger, who did not fail to improve his opportunity, now triumphs in the possession of enormous wealth. His triumph is to hoard it in solitary wretchedness, and probably to feel with the expenditure of every shilling a greater pang than the loss of his whole inheritance ever cost his brother.

Jack Redburn—he was Jack Redburn at the first little school he went to where every other child was mastered and surnamed, and he has been Jack Redburn all his life or he would perhaps have been a richer man by this time—has been an inmate of my house these eight years past. He is my librarian, secretary, steward, and first minister: director of all my affairs and inspector general of my household. He is something of a musician, something of an author, something of an actor, something of a painter, very much of a carpenter, and an extraordinary gardener: having had all his life a wonderful aptitude for learning everything that was of no use to him. He is remarkably fond of children and is the best and kindest nurse in sickness that ever drew the breath of life. He has mixed with every grade of society and known the utmost distress, but there never was a less selfish, a more tender-hearted, a more enthusiastic or a more guileless man, and I dare say if few have done less good fewer still have done less harm in the world than he. By what chance Nature forms such whimsical jumbles I don't know, but I do know that she sends them among us very often and that the king of the whole race is Jack Redburn.

I should be puzzled to say how old he is. His health is none of the best, and he wears a quantity of iron-grey hair which shades his face and gives it rather a worn appearance; but we consider him quite a young fellow notwithstanding, and if a youthful spirit surviving the roughest contact with the world confers upon its possessor any title to be considered young, then he is a mere child. The only interruptions to his careless cheerfulness are on a wet Sunday when he is apt to be unusually religious and solemn, and sometimes of an evening when he has been blowing a very slow tune on the flute. On these last-named occasions he is apt to incline towards the mysterious or the terrible. As a specimen of his powers in this mood, I refer my readers to the extract from the clock-case which follows this paper; he brought it to me not long ago at midnight, and informed me that the main incident had been suggested by a dream of the night before.

His apartments are two cheerful rooms looking towards the garden, and one of his great delights is to arrange and re-arrange the furniture in these chambers and put it in every possible variety of position. During the whole time he has been here, I do not think he has slept for two nights running with the head of his bed in the same place, and every time he moves it, is to be the last. My housekeeper was at first well nigh distracted by these frequent changes; but she has become quite reconciled to them by degrees, and has so fallen in with his humour that they often consult together with great gravity on the final alteration. Whatever his arrangements are, however, they are always a pattern of neatness, and

every one of the manifold articles connected with his manifold occupations, is to be found in its own particular place. Until within the last two or three years he was subject to an occasional fit (which usually came upon him in very fine weather) under the influence of which he would dress himself with peculiar care, and going out, under pretence of taking a walk, disappear for several days together. At length after the interval between each outbreak of this disorder had gradually grown longer and longer, it wholly disappeared, and now he seldom stirs abroad except to stroll out a little way on a summer's evening. Whether he yet mistrusts his own constancy in this respect and is therefore afraid to wear a coat, I know not, but we seldom see him in any other upper garment than an old spectral-looking dressing gown with very disproportionate pockets, full of a miscellaneous collection of odd matters which he picks up wherever he can lay his hands upon them.

Everything that is a favourite with our friend is a favourite with us, and thus it happens that the fourth among us is Mr. Owen Miles, a most worthy gentleman who had treated Jack with great kindness before my deaf friend and I encountered him by an accident to which I may refer on some future occasion. Mr. Miles was once a very rich merchant, but receiving a severe shock in the death of his wife, he retired from business and devoted himself to a quiet unostentatious life. He is an excellent man of thoroughly sterling character: not of quick apprehension, and not without some amusing prejudices, which I shal' leave to their own developement. He holds us all in profound veneration, but Jack Redburn he esteems as a kind of pleasant wonder, that he may venture tc approach familiarly. He believes, not only that no man ever lived who could do so many things as Jack, but that no man ever lived who could do anything so well, and he never calls my attention to any of his ingenious proceedings but he whispers in my ear, nudging me at the same time with his elbow—"If he had only made it his trade sir—if he had only made it his trade!"—

They are inseparable companions; one would almost suppose that although Mr. Miles never by any chance does anything in the way of assistance, Jack could do nothing without him. Whether he is reading, writing, painting, carpentering, gardening, flute-playing, or what not, there is Mr. Miles beside him, buttoned up to the chin in his blue coat, and looking on with a face of incredulous delight as though he could not credit the testimony of his own senses, and had a misgiving that no man could be so clever but in a dream.

These are my friends; I have now introduced myself and them.

THE CLOCK-CASE.

A CONFESSION FOUND IN A PRISON IN THE TIME OF CHARLES THE SECOND.

I HELD a lieutenant's commission in His Majesty's army, and served abroad in the campaigns of 1677 and 1678. The treaty of Nimeguen being concluded, I returned home, and retiring from the service withdrew to a small estate lying a few miles east of London, which I had recently acquired in right of my wife.

This is the last night I have to live, and I will set down the naked truth without disguise. I was never a brave man, and had always been from my childhood of a secret, sullen, distrustful nature. I speak of myself as if I had passed from the world, for while I write this my grave is digging and my name is written in the black book of death.

Soon after my return to England, my only brother was seized with mortal illness. This circumstance gave me slight or no pain, for since we had been men we had associated but very little together. He was open-hearted and generous, handsomer than I, more accomplished, and generally beloved. Those who sought my acquaintance abroad or at home because they were friends of his, seldom attached themselves to me long, and would usually say in our first conversation that they were surprised to find two brothers so unlike in their manners and appearance. It was my habit to lead them on to this avowal, for I knew what comparisons they must draw between us, and having a rankling envy in my heart, I sought to justify it to myself.

We had married two sisters. This additional tie between us, as it may appear to some, only estranged us the more. His

wife knew me well. I never struggled with any secret jealousy or gall when she was present, but that woman knew it as well as I did. I never raised my eyes at such times but I found hers fixed upon me; I never bent them on the ground or looked another way, but I felt that she overlooked me always. It was an inexpressible relief to me when we quarrelled, and a greater relief still when I heard abroad that she was dead. It seems to me now as if some strange and terrible foreshadowing of what has happened since, must have hung over us then. I was afraid of her, she haunted me, her fixed and steady look comes back upon me now like the memory of a dark dream, and makes my blood run cold.

She died shortly after giving birth to a child — a boy. When my brother knew that all hope of his own recovery was past, he called my wife to his bed-side and confided this orphan, a child of four years old, to her protection. He bequeathed to him all the property he had, and willed that in case of the child's death it should pass to my wife as the only acknowledgment he could make her for her care and love. He exchanged a few brotherly words with me deploring our long separation, and being exhausted, fell into a slumber from which he never awoke.

We had no children, and as there had been a strong affection between the sisters, and my wife had almost supplied the place of a mother to this boy, she loved him as if he had been her own. The child was ardently attached to her; but he was his mother's image in face and spirit, and always mistrusted me.

I can hardly fix the date when the feeling first came upon me, but I soon began to be uneasy when this child was by. I never roused myself from some moody train of thought, but I marked him looking at me: not with mere childish wonder, but with something of the purpose and meaning that I had so often noted in his mother. It was no effort of my fancy, founded on close resemblance of feature and expression. I never could look the boy down. He feared me, but seemed by some instinct to despise me while he did so; and even when he drew back beneath my gaze—as he would when we were alone, to get nearer to the door — he would keep his bright eyes upon me still.

Perhaps I hide the truth from myself, but I do not think that when this began, I meditated to do him any wrong. I may have thought how serviceable his inheritance would be to us, and may have wished him dead, but I believe I had no thought of compassing his death. Neither did the idea come upon me at once, but by very slow degrees, presenting itself at first in dim shapes at a very great distance, as men may think of an earthquake or the last day—then drawing nearer and nearer and losing something of its horror and improbability—then coming to be part and parcel, nay nearly the whole sum and substance of my daily thoughts, and resolving itself into a question of means and safety; not of doing or abstaining from the deed.

While this was going on within me, I never could bear that the child should see me looking at him, and yet I was under a fascination which made it a kind of business with me to contemplate his slight and fragile figure and think how easily it might be done. Sometimes I would steal up stairs and watch him as he slept, but usually I hovered in the garden near the window of the room in which he learnt his little tasks, and there as he sat upon a low seat beside my wife, I would peer at him for hours together from behind a tree: starting like the guilty wretch I was at every rustling of a leaf, and still gliding back to look and start again.

Hard by our cottage, but quite out of sight, and (if there were any wind astir) of hearing too, was a deep sheet of water. I spent days in shaping with my pocket-knife, a rough model of a boat, which I finished at last and dropped in the child's way. Then I withdrew to a secret place which he must pass if he stole away alone to swim this bauble, and lurked there for his coming. He came neither that day nor the next, though I waited from noon till nightfall. I was sure that I had him in my net, for I had heard him prattling of the toy, and knew that in his infant pleasure he kept it by his side in bed. I felt no weariness or fatigue, but waited patiently, and on the third day he passed me, running joyously along, with his silken hair streaming in the wind and he singing—God have mercy upon me! — singing a merry ballad—who could hardly lisp the words.

I stole down after him, creeping under certain shrubs which grow in that place, and none but devils know with what terror I, a strong full-grown man, tracked the footsteps of that baby as he approached the water's brink. I was close upon him, had sunk upon my knee and raised my hand to thrust him in, when he saw my shadow in the stream and turned him round.

His mother's ghost was looking from his eyes. The sun burst forth from behind a cloud: it shone in the bright sky, the glistening earth, the clear water, the sparkling drops of rain upon the leaves. There were eyes in everything. The whole great universe of light was there to see

the murder done. I know not what he said; he came of bold and manly blood, and child as he was, he did not crouch or fawn upon me. I heard him cry that he would try to love me—not that he did—and then I saw him running back towards the house. The next I saw was my own sword naked in my hand, and he lying at my feet stark dead—dabbled here and there with blood, but otherwise no different from what I had seen him in his sleep—in the same attitude too, with his cheek resting upon his little hand.

I took him in my arms and laid him—very gently now that he was dead—in a thicket. My wife was from home that day and would not return until the next. Our bed-room window, the only sleeping room on that side of the house, was but a few feet from the ground, and I resolved to descend from it at night and bury him in the garden. I had no thought that I had failed in my design, no thought that the water would be dragged and nothing found, that the money must now lay waste since I must encourage the idea that the child was lost or stolen. All my thoughts were bound up and knotted together in the one absorbing necessity of hiding what I had done.

How I felt when they came to tell me that the child was missing, when I ordered scouts in all directions, when I gasped and trembled at every one's approach, no tongue can tell or mind of man conceive. I buried him that night. When I parted the boughs and looked into the dark thicket, there was a glow-worm shining like the visible spirit of God upon the murdered child. I glanced down into his grave when I had placed him there, and still it gleamed upon his breast: an eye of fire looking up to Heaven in supplication to the stars that watched me at my work.

I had to meet my wife, and break the news, and give her hope that the child would soon be found. All this I did—with some appearance, I suppose, of being sincere, for I was the object of no suspicion. This done, I sat at the bed-room window all day long, and watched the spot where the dreadful secret lay.

It was in a piece of ground which had been dug up to be newly turfed, and which I had chosen on that account as the traces of my spade were less likely to attract attention. The men who laid down the grass must have thought me mad. I called to them continually to expedite their work, ran out and worked beside them, trod down the turf with my feet, and hurried them with frantic eagerness. They had finished their task before night, and then I thought myself comparatively safe.

I slept—not as men do who wake refreshed and cheerful, but I did sleep, passing from vague and shadowy dreams of being hunted down, to visions of the plot of grass, through which now a hand and now a foot and now the head itself was starting out. At this point I always woke and stole to the window to make sure that it was not really so. That done I crept to bed again, and thus I spent the night in fits and starts, getting up and lying down full twenty times, and dreaming the same dream over and over again—which was far worse than lying awake, for every dream had a whole night's suffering of its own. Once I thought that the child was alive and that I had never tried to kill him. To wake from that dream was the most dreadful agony of all.

The next day I sat at the window again, never once taking my eyes from the place, which, although it was covered by the grass, was as plain to me—its shape, its size, its depth, its jagged sides, and all—as if it had been open to the light of day. When a servant walked across it, I felt as if he must sink in; when he had passed I looked to see that his feet had not worn the edges. If a bird lighted there, I was in terror lest by some tremendous interposition it should be instrumental in the discovery; if a breath of air sighed across it, to me it whispered murder. There was not a sight or sound, how ordinary, mean, or unimportant soever but was fraught with fear. And in this state of ceaseless watching I spent three days.

On the fourth there came to the gate one who had served with me abroad, accompanied by a brother officer of his whom I had never seen. I felt that I could not bear to be out of sight of the place. It was a summer evening, and I bade my people take a table and a flask of wine into the garden. Then I sat down *with my chair upon the grave*, and being assured that nobody could disturb it now, without my knowledge, tried to drink and talk.

They hoped that my wife was well—that she was not obliged to keep her chamber—that they had not frightened her away. What could I do but tell them with a faltering tongue about the child? The officer whom I did not know was a down-looking man, and kept his eyes upon the ground while I was speaking. Even that terrified me! I could not divest myself of the idea that he saw something there which caused him to suspect the truth. I asked hurriedly if he supposed that—and stopped. "That the child has been murdered?" said he, looking mildly at me. "Oh, no! what could a man gain by murdering a poor child?" *I* could have told him what a

man gained by such a deed, no one better, but I held my peace, and shivered as with an ague.

Mistaking my emotion they were endeavouring to cheer me with the hope that the boy would certainly be found—great cheer that was for me—when we heard a low, deep howl, and presently there sprung over the wall two great dogs, who bounding into the garden repeated the baying sound we had heard before.

"Blood-hounds!" cried my visiters.

What need to tell me that! I had never seen one of that kind in all my life, but I knew what they were, and for what purpose they had come. I grasped the elbows of my chair, and neither spoke nor moved.

"They are of the genuine breed," said the man whom I had known abroad, "and being out for exercise have no doubt escaped from their keeper. What noble animals they are!"

Both he and his friend turned to look at the dogs, who, with their noses to the ground, moved restlessly about, running to and fro, and up and down, and across, and round in circles, careering about like wild things, and all this time taking no notice of us, but ever and again lifting their heads and repeating the yell we had heard already, then dropping their noses to the ground again, and tracking earnestly here and there. They now began to snuff the earth more eagerly than they had done yet, and although they were still very restless, no longer beat about in such wide circuits, but kept near to one spot, and constantly diminished the distance between themselves and me.

At last they came up close to the great chair on which I sat, and raising their frightful howl once more, tried to tear away the wooden rails that kept them from the ground beneath. I saw how I looked in the faces of the two who were with me.

"They scent some prey," said they, both together.

"They scent no prey!" cried I.

"In Heaven's name, move," said the one I knew, very earnestly, "or you will be torn to pieces."

"Let them tear me limb from limb, I'll never leave this place!" cried I. "Are dogs to hurry men to shameful deaths? Hew them down, cut them in pieces."

"There is some foul mystery here!" said the officer whom I did not know, drawing his sword. "In King Charles's name, assist me to secure this man."

They both set upon me and forced me away, though I fought and bit and caught at them like a madman. After a struggle they got me quietly between them, and then, my God! I saw the angry dogs tearing at the earth, and throwing it up into the air like water.

What more have I to tell! That I fell upon my knees and with chattering teeth confessed the truth, and prayed to be forgiven. That I have since denied and now confess to it again. That I have been tried for the crime, foun guilty, and sentenced. That I have not the courage to anticipate my doom or to bear up manfully against it. That I have no compassion, no consolation, no hope, no friend. That my wife has happily lost for the time those faculties which would enable her to know my misery or hers. That I am alone in this stone dungeon with my evil spirit, and that I die to-morrow!

PERSONAL ADVENTURES OF MASTER HUMPHREY.

The Old Curiosity Shop.

NIGHT is generally my time for walking. In the summer I often leave home early in the morning, and roam about fields and lanes all day, or even escape for days or weeks together, but saving in the country I seldom go out until after dark, though, Heaven be thanked, I love its light and feel the cheerfulness it sheds upon the earth, as much as any creature living.

I have fallen insensibly into this habit, both because it favours my infirmity, and because it affords me greater opportunity of speculating on the characters and occupations of those who fill the streets. The glare and hurry of broad noon are not adapted to idle pursuits like mine; a glimpse of passing faces caught by the light of a street lamp or a shop window is often better for my purpose than their full revelation in the daylight, and, if I must add the truth, night is kinder in this respect than day, which too often destroys an air-built castle at the moment of its completion, without the smallest ceremony or remorse.

That constant pacing to and fro, that never-ending restlessness, that incessant tread of feet wearing the rough stones smooth and glossy—is it not a wonder how the dwellers in narrow ways can bear to hear it? Think of a sick man in such a place as Saint Martin's court, listening to the footsteps, and in the midst of pain and weariness obliged, despite himself, (as though it were a task he must perform) to detect the child's step from the man's, the slipshod beggar from the booted exquisite, the lounging from the busy, the dull heel of the sauntering outcast from the quick tread of an expectant pleasure-seeker—think of the hum and noise being always present to his senses, and of the stream of life that will not stop, pouring on, on, on, through all his restless dreams, as if he were condemned to lie dead, but conscious, in a noisy churchyard, and had no hope of rest for centuries to come.

Then the crowds for ever passing and repassing on the bridges (or those which are free of toll at least) where many stop on fine evenings looking listlessly down upon the water, with some vague idea that by and by it runs between green banks which grow wider and wider, until at last it joins the broad vast sea — where some halt to rest from heavy loads, and think as they look over the parapet that to smoke and lounge away one's life, and lie sleeping in the sun upon a hot tarpaulin, in a dull, slow, sluggish barge, must be happiness unalloyed, and where some, and a very different class, pause with heavier loads than they, remembering to have heard or read in some old time that drowning was not a hard death, but of all means of suicide the easiest and best.

Covent Garden Market at sunrise too, in the spring or summer, when the fragrance of sweet flowers is in the air, overpowering even the unwholesome steams of last night's debauchery, and driving the dusky thrush, whose cage has hung outside a garret window all night long, half mad with joy! Poor bird! the only neighbouring thing at all akin to the other little captives, some of whom, shrinking from the hot hands of drunken purchasers, lie drooping on the path already, while others, soddened by close contact, await the time when they shall be watered and freshened up to please more sober company, and make old clerks who pass them on their road to business, wonder what has filled their breasts with visions of the country.

But my present purpose is not to expatiate upon my walks, for I have an adventure to relate; it arose out of one of these rambles, and thus I have been led to speak of them by way of preface.

One night I had roamed into the city, and was walking slowly on in my usual way, musing upon a great many things, when I was arrested by an inquiry, the purport of which did not reach me, but which seemed to be addressed to myself, and was preferred in a soft sweet voice that struck me very pleasantly. I turned hastily round and found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town.

"It is a very long way from here," said I, "my child."

"I know that, sir," she replied timidly "I am afraid it is a very long way, for I came from there to-night."

"Alone!" said I, in some surprise.

"Oh yes, I don't mind that; but I am a little frightened now, for I have lost my road."

"And what made you ask it of me? Suppose I should tell you wrong."

"I am sure you will not do that," said the little creature; "you are such a very old gentleman, and walk so slow yourself."

I cannot describe how much I was im

pressed by this appeal and the energy with which it was made, which brought a tear into the child's clear eye, and made her slight figure tremble as she looked up into my face.

"Come," said I, "I'll take you there."

She put her hand in mine as confidingly as if she had known me from her cradle, and we trudged away together; the little creature accommodating her pace to mine, and rather seeming to lead and take care of me than I to be protecting her. I observed that every now and then she stole a curious look at my face, as if to make quite sure that I was not deceiving her, and that these glances (very sharp and keen they were too) seemed to increase her confidence at every repetition.

For my part, my curiosity and interest were at least equal to the child's, for child she certainly was, although I thought it probable from what I could make out, that her very small and delicate frame imparted a peculiar youthfulness to her appearance. Though more scantily attired than she might have been, she was dressed with perfect neatness, and betrayed no marks of poverty or neglect.

"Who has sent you so far by yourself?" said I.

"Somebody who is very kind to me, sir."

"And what have you been doing?"

"That, I must not tell," said the child firmly.

There was something in the manner of this reply which caused me to look at the little creature with an involuntary expression of surprise; for I wondered what kind of errand it might be that occasioned her to be prepared for questioning. Her quick eye seemed to read my thoughts, for as it met mine she added that there was no harm in what she had been doing, but it was a great secret—a secret which she did not even know herself.

This was said with no appearance of cunning or deceit, but with an unsuspicious frankness that bore the impress of truth. She walked on as before, growing more familiar with me as we proceeded, and talking cheerfully by the way; but she said no more about her home, beyond remarking that we were going quite a new road, and asking if it were a short one.

While we were thus engaged, I revolved in my mind a hundred different explanations of the riddle, and rejected them every one. I really felt ashamed to take advantage of the ingenuousness or grateful feeling of the child for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity. I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us. As I had felt pleased at first by her confidence, I determined to deserve it, and to do credit to the nature which had prompted her to repose it in me.

There was no reason, however, why I should refrain from seeing the person who had inconsiderately sent her to so great a distance by night and alone; and as it was not improbable that if she found herself near home, she might take farewell of me and deprive me of the opportunity, I avoided the most frequented ways and took the most intricate,—and thus it was not until we arrived in the street itself, that she knew where we were. Clapping her hands with pleasure and running on before me for a short distance, my little acquaintance stopped at a door, and remaining on the step till I came up, knocked at it when I joined her.

A part of this door was glass unprotected by any shutter, which I did not observe at first, for all was very dark and silent within, and I was anxious (as indeed the child was also) for an answer to our summons. When she had knocked twice or thrice, there was a noise as if some person were moving inside, and at length a faint light appeared through the glass, which, as it approached very slowly, the bearer having to make his way through a great many scattered articles, enabled me to see both what kind of person it was who advanced and what kind of place it was through which he came.

It was a little old man with long grey hair, whose face and figure, as he held the light above his head and looked before him as he approached, I could plainly see. Though much altered by age, I fancied I could recognise in his spare and slender form something of that delicate mould which I had noticed in the child. Their bright blue eyes were certainly alike; but his face was so deeply furrowed and so very full of care, that here all resemblance ceased.

The place through which he made his way at leisure, was one of those receptacles for old and curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of this town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there, fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters, rusty weapons of various kinds, distorted figures in china and wood and iron and ivory: tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches and tombs and deserted houses, and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but what was in keeping with himself; nothing that looked older or more worn than he.

As he turned the key in the lock, he surveyed me with some astonishment, which was not diminished when he looked from me to my companion. The door being opened, the child addressed him as grandfather and told him the little story of our companionship.

"Why bless thee child," said the old man patting her on the head, "how couldst thou miss thy way—what if I had lost thee, Nell!"

"I would have found my way back to *you*, grandfather," said the child boldly; "never fear."

The old man kissed her, and then turning to me and begging me to walk in, I did so. The door was closed and locked. Preceding me with the light, he led me through the place I had already seen from without, into a small sitting room behind, in which was another door opening into a kind of closet, where I saw a little bed that a fairy might have slept in, it looked so very small and was so prettily arranged. The child took a candle and tripped into this little room, leaving the old man and me together.

"You must be tired, sir," said he, as he placed a chair near the fire, "how can I thank you?"

"By taking more care of your grandchild another time, my good friend," I replied.

"More care!" said the old man in a shrill voice, "more care of Nelly! why who ever loved a child as I love Nell!"

He said this with such evident surprise that I was perplexed what answer to make, and the more so because coupled with something feeble and wandering in his manner, there were in his face marks of deep and anxious thought which convinced me that he could not be, as I had at first been inclined to suppose, in a state of dotage or imbecility.

"I don't think you consider"—I began

"I don't consider!" cried the old man, interrupting me. "I don't consider her! ah, how little you know of the truth! Little Nelly, little Nelly!"

It would be impossible for any man, I care not what his form of speech might be, to express more affection than the dealer in curiosities did, in these four words. I waited for him to speak again, but he rested his chin upon his hand and shaking his head twice or thrice fixed his eyes upon the fire.

While we were sitting thus in silence, the door of the closet opened, and the child returned, her light brown hair hanging loose about her neck, and her face flushed with the haste she had made to rejoin us. She busied herself immediately in preparing supper, and while she was thus engaged I remarked that the old man took an opportunity of observing me more closely than he had done yet. I was surprised to see

that all this time everything was done by the child, and that there appeared to be no other persons but ourselves in the house. I took advantage of a moment when she was absent to venture a hint on this point, to which the old man replied that there were few grown persons as trustworthy or as careful as she.

"It always grieves me," I observed, roused by what I took to be his selfishness, "it always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life, when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity—two of the best qualities that Heaven gives them—and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments."

"It will never check hers," said the old man, looking steadily at me, "the springs are too deep. Besides, the children of the poor know but few pleasures. Even the cheap delights of childhood must be bought and paid for."

"But—forgive me for saying this—you are surely not so very poor"—said I.

"She is not my child, sir," returned the old man. "Her mother was, and she was poor. I save nothing — not a penny — though I live as you see, but"—he laid his hand upon my arm and leant forward to whisper, "She shall be rich one of these days, and a fine lady. Do n't you think ill of me because I use her help. She gives it cheerfully as you see, and it would break her heart if she knew that I suffered anybody else to do for me what her little hands could undertake. I do n't consider!"—he cried with sudden querulousness, "why, God knows that this one child is the thought and object of my life, and yet he never prospers me—no, never."

At this juncture, the subject of our conversation again returned, and the old man motioning to me to approach the table, broke off, and said no more.

We had scarcely begun our repast when there was a knock at the door by which I had entered, and Nell bursting into a hearty laugh, which I was rejoiced to hear, for it was childlike and full of hilarity, said it was no doubt dear old Kit come back at last.

"Foolish Nell!" said the old man fondling with her hair. "She always laughs at poor Kit."

The child laughed again more heartily than before, and I could not help smiling from pure sympathy. The little old man took up a candle and went to open the door. When he came back, Kit was at his heels.

Kit was a shock-headed shambling awkward lad, with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose, and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw. He stopped short at the door on seeing a stranger, twirled in his hand a perfectly round old hat without any vestige of a brim, and resting himself now on one leg and now on the other, and changing them constantly, stood in the door-way, looking into the parlour with the most extraordinary leer I ever beheld. I entertained a grateful feeling towards the boy from that minute, for I felt that he was the comedy of the child's life.

"A long way, wasn't it, Kit?" said the little old man.

"Why then, it was a goodish stretch, master," returned Kit.

"Did you find the house easily?"

"Why then, not over and above easy, master," said Kit.

"Of course you have come back hungry?"

"Why then, I do consider myself rather so, master," was the answer.

The lad had a remarkable way of standing sideways as he spoke, and thrusting his head forward over his shoulder, as if he could not get at his voice without that accompanying action. I think he would have amused one anywhere, but the child's exquisite enjoyment of his oddity, and the relief it was to find that there was something she associated with merriment in a place that appeared so unsuited to her, were quite irresistible. It was a great point too that Kit himself was flattered by the sensation he created, and after several efforts to preserve his gravity, burst into a loud roar, and so stood with his mouth wide open and his eyes nearly shut, laughing violently.

The old man had again relapsed into his former abstraction and took no notice of what passed, but I remarked that when her laugh was over, the child's bright eyes were dimmed with tears, called forth by the fulness of heart with which she welcomed her uncouth favourite after the little anxiety of the night. As for Kit himself (whose laugh had been all the time one of that sort which very little would change into a cry) he carried a large slice of bread and meat and a mug of beer into a corner, and applied himself to disposing of them with great voracity.

"Ah!" said the old man turning to me with a sigh as if I had spoken to him but that moment, "you don't know what you say when you tell me that I don't consider her."

"You must not attach too great weight to a remark founded on first appearances, my friend," said I.

"No," returned the old man thoughtfully, "no. Come hither Nell."

The little girl hastened from her seat, and put her arm about his neck.

"Do I love thee, Nell?" said he. "Say—do I love thee, Nell, or no?"

The child only answered by her caresses, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Why dost thou sob?" said the grandfather, pressing her closer to him and glancing towards me. "Is it because thou know'st I love thee, and dost not like that I should seem to doubt it by my question? Well, well—then let us say I love thee dearly."

"Indeed, indeed you do," replied the child with great earnestness, "Kit knows you do."

Kit, who in despatching his bread and meat had been swallowing two-thirds of his knife at every mouthful with the coolness of a juggler, stopped short in his operations on being thus appealed to, and bawled "Nobody isn't such a fool as to say he doesn't," after which he incapacitated himself for further conversation by taking a most prodigious sandwich at one bite.

"She is poor now"—said the old man patting the child's cheek, "but I say again that the time is coming when she shall be rich. It has been a long time coming, but it must come at last; a very long time, but it surely must come. It has come to other men who do nothing but waste and riot. When *will* it come to me!"

"I am very happy as I am, grandfather," said the child.

"Tush, tush!" returned the old man, "thou dost not know—how should'st thou!" Then he muttered again between his teeth, "The time must come, I am very sure it must. It will be all the better for coming late!" and then he sighed and fell into his former musing state, and still holding the child between his knees appeared to be insensible to everything around him. By this time it wanted but a few minutes of midnight, and I rose to go, which recalled him to himself.

"One moment, sir," he said. "Now Kit—near midnight, boy, and you still here! Get home, get home, and be true to your time in the morning, for there's work to do. Good night! There, bid him good night, Nell, and let him be gone!"

"Good night, Kit," said the child, her eyes lighting up with merriment and kindness.

"Good night, Miss Nell," returned the boy.

"And thank this gentleman," interposed the old man, "but for whose care I might have lost my little girl to-night."

"No, no, master," said Kit, "that won't do, that won't."

"What do you mean?" cried the old man.

"I'd have found her, master," said Kit, "I'd have found her. I'd bet that I'd find her if she was above ground, I would as quick as anybody, master. Ha, ha, ha!"

Once more opening his mouth and shutting his eyes, and laughing like a stentor, Kit gradually backed to the door, and roared himself out.

Free of the room, the boy was not slow in taking his departure; when he had gone and the child was occupied in clearing the table, the old man said:

"I haven't seemed to thank you, sir, enough for what you have done to-night, but I do thank you humbly and heartily, and so does she, and her thanks are better worth than mine. I should be sorry that you went away and thought I was unmindful of your goodness, or careless of her—I am not indeed."

I was sure of that, I said, from what I had seen. "But," I added, "may I ask you a question?"

"Ay sir," replied the old man, "what is it?"

"This delicate child," said I, "with so much beauty and intelligence—has she nobody to care for her but you, has she no other companion or adviser?"

"No," he returned looking steadfastly in my face, "no, and she wants no other."

"But are you not fearful," said I, "that you may misunderstand a charge so tender? I am sure you mean well, but are you quite certain that you know how to execute such a trust as this? I am an old man, like you, and I am actuated by an old man's concern in all that is young and promising. Do you not think that what I have seen of you and this little creature to-night must have an interest not wholly free from pain?"

"Sir," rejoined the old man after a moment's silence, "I have no right to feel hurt at what you say. It is true that in many respects I am the child, and she the grown person—that you have seen already. But waking or sleeping, by night or day, in sickness or health, she is the one object of my care, and if you knew of how much care, you would look on me with different eyes, you would indeed. Ah! it's a weary life for an old man—a weary, weary life—but there is a great end to gain, and that I keep before me."

Seeing that he was in a state of excitement and impatience, I turned to put on an outer coat which I had thrown off on entering the room, purposing to say no more. I was surprised to see the child standing patiently by with a cloak upon her arm, and in her hand a hat and stick.

"Those are not mine, my dear," said I.

"No," returned the child quietly, "they are grandfather's."

"But he is not going out to-night."

"Oh, yes he is," said the child, with a smile.

"And what becomes of you, my pretty one?"

"Me! I stay here, of course. I always do."

I looked in astonishment towards the old man, but he was, or feigned to be, busied in the arrangement of his dress. From him I looked back to the slight gentle figure of the child. Alone! In that gloomy place all the long, dreary night!

She evinced no consciousness of my surprise, but cheerfully helped the old man with his cloak, and when he was ready took a candle to light us out. Finding that we did not follow as she expected, she looked back with a smile and waited for us. The old man showed by his face that he plainly understood the cause of my hesitation, but he merely signed to me with an inclination of the head to pass out of the room before him, and remained silent. I had no resource but to comply.

When we reached the door, the child setting down the candle, turned to say good night, and raised her face to kiss me. Then she ran to the old man, who folded her in his arms and bade God bless her."

"Sleep soundly, Nell," he said in a low voice, "and angels guard thy bed. Do not forget thy prayers, my sweet.

"No indeed," answered the child fervently, "they make me feel so happy!"

"That's well; I know they do; they should," said the old man. "Bless thee a hundred times. Early in the morning I shall be home."

"You'll not ring twice," returned the child. "The bell wakes me, even in the middle of a dream."

With this they separated. The child opened the door (now guarded by a shutter which I had heard the boy put up before he left the house) and with another farewell, whose clear and tender note I have recalled a thousand times, held it until we had passed out. The old man paused a moment while it was gently closed and fastened on the inside, and satisfied that this was done, walked on at a slow pace. At the street-corner he stopped, and regarding me with a troubled countenance said that our ways were widely different and that he must take his leave. I would have spoken, but summoning up more alacrity than might have been expected in one of his appearance, he hurried away. I could see that twice or thrice he looked back as if to ascertain if I were still watching him, or perhaps to assure himself that I was not following at a distance. The obscurity of the night favoured his disappearance, and his figure was soon beyond my sight.

I remained standing on the spot where he had left me, unwilling to depart, and yet unknowing why I should loiter there. I looked wistfully into the street we had lately quitted, and after a time directed my steps that way. I passed and repassed the house, and stopped and listened at the door; all was dark, and silent as the grave.

Yet I lingered about, and could not tear myself away, thinking of all possible harm that might happen to the child—of fires and robberies and even murder—and feeling as if some evil must ensue if I turned my back upon the place. The closing of a door or window in the street brought me before the curiosity-dealer's once more; I crossed the road and looked up at the house to assure myself that the noise had not come from there. No, it was black, cold, and lifeless as before.

There were few passengers astir: the street was sad and dismal, and pretty well my own. A few stragglers from the theatres hurried by, and now and then I turned aside to avoid some noisy drunkard as he reeled homewards; but these interruptions were not frequent, and soon ceased. The clock struck one. Still I paced up and down, promising myself that every time should be the last, and breaking faith with myself on some new plea as often as I did so.

The more I thought of what the old man had said, and of his looks and bearing, the less I could account for what I had seen and heard. I had a strange misgiving that his nightly absence was for no good purpose. I had only come to know the fact through the innocence of the child, and though the old man was by at the time and saw my undisguised surprise, he had preserved a strange mystery upon the subject, and offered no word of explanation. These reflections naturally recalled again more strongly than before his haggard face, his wandering manner, his restless, anxious looks. His affection for the child might not be inconsistent with villany of the worst kind; even that very affection was in itself an extraordinary contradiction, or how could he leave her thus? Disposed as I was to think badly of him, I never doubted that his love for her was real. I could not admit the thought, remembering what had passed between us, and the tone of voice in which he had called her by her name.

"Stop here, of course," the child had said in answer to my question, "I always do!" What could take him from home by night, and every night? I called up all

the strange tales I had ever heard of dark and secret deeds committed in great towns and escaping detection for a long series of years; wild as many of these stories were, I could not find one adapted to this mystery, which only became the more impenetrable, in proportion as I sought to solve it.

Occupied with such thoughts as these, and a crowd of others all tending to the same point, I continued to pace the street for two long hours; at length the rain began to descend heavily, and then overpowered by fatigue though no less interested than I had been at first, I engaged the nearest coach and so got home. A cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth, the lamp burnt brightly, my clock received me with its old familiar welcome; everything was quiet, warm, and cheering, and in happy contrast to the gloom and darkness I had quitted.

But all that night, waking or in my sleep, the same thoughts recurred and the same images retained possession of my brain. I had ever before me the old dark murky rooms — the gaunt suits of mail with their ghostly silent air—the faces all awry, grinning from wood and stone—the dust and rust and worm that lives in wood—and alone in the midst of all this lumber and decay and ugly age, the beautiful child in her gentle slumber, smiling through her light and sunny dreams.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Master Humphrey has been favoured with the following letter, written on strongly-scented paper, and sealed in light blue wax with the representation of two very plump Loves, interchanging beaks. It does not commence with any of the usual forms of address, but begins as is here set forth.

Bath, Wednesday Night

Heavens! into what an indiscretion do I suffer myself to be betrayed! To address these faltering lines to a total stranger, and that stranger one of a conflicting sex! — and yet I am precipitated into the abyss, and have no power of self-

snatchation (forgive me if I coin that phrase) from the yawning gulf before me.

Yes, I am writing to a man, but let me not think of that, for madness is in the thought. You will understand my feelings! Oh yes! I am sure you will! and you will respect them too, and not despise them—will you?

Let me be calm. That portrait—smiling as once he smiled on me—that cane dangling as I have seen it dangle from his hand I know not how oft—those legs that have glided through my nightly dreams and never stopped to speak—the perfectly gentlemanly though false original—can I be mistaken? oh, no, no.

Let me be calmer yet; I would be calm as coffins. You have published a letter from one whose likeness is engraved, but whose name (and wherefore?) is suppressed. Shall *I* breathe that name! Is it—but why ask when my heart tells me too truly that it is!

I would not upbraid him with his treachery, I would not remind him of those times when he plighted the most eloquent of vows, and procured from me a small pecuniary accommodation—and yet I would see him—see him did I say—*him*—alas! such is woman's nature. For as the poet beautifully says—but you will already have anticipated the sentiment. Is it not sweet? oh, yes!

It was in this city (hallowed by the recollection) that I met him first, and assuredly if mortal happiness be recorded anywhere, then those rubbers with their three-and-sixpenny points are scored on tablets of celestial brass. He always held an honour—generally two. On that eventful night we stood at eight. He raised his eyes (luminous in their seductive sweetness) to my agitated face. "*Can* you?" said he, with peculiar meaning. I felt the gentle pressure of his foot on mine; our corns throbbed in unison. "*Can* you?" he said again, and every lineament of his expressive countenance added the words "resist me?" I murmured "No," and fainted.

They said when I recovered, it was the weather. *I* said it was the nutmeg in the negus. How little did they suspect the truth! How little did they guess the deep mysterious meaning of that inquiry! He called next morning on his knees—I do not mean to say that he actually came in that position to the house door, but that he went down upon those joints directly the servant had retired. He brought some verses in his hat which he said were original, but which I have since found were Milton's. Likewise a little bottle labelled laudanum: also a pistol and a swordstick. He drew the latter, uncorked the former, and clicked the trigger of the pocket fire-arm. He had come, he said, to conquer or to die. He did not die. He wrested from me an avowal of my love, and let off the pistol out of a back window previous to partaking of a slight repast.

Faithless, inconstant man! How many ages seem to have elapsed since his unaccountable and perfidious disappearance! Could I still forgive him both that and the borrowed lucre that he promised to pay next week! Could I spurn him from my feet if he approached in penitence, and with a matrimonial object! Would the blandishing enchanter still weave his spells around me, or should I burst them all and turn away in coldness! I dare not trust my weakness with the thought.

My brain is in a whirl again. You know his address, his occupations, his mode of life, are acquainted perhaps with his inmost thoughts. You are a humane and philanthropic character—reveal all you know—all; but especially the street and number of his lodgings. The post is departing, the bellman rings—pray Heaven it be not the knell of love and hope to

Belinda.

P. S.—Pardon the wanderings of a bad pen and a distracted mind. Address to the Post-office. The bellman rendered impatient by delay is ringing dreadfully in the passage.

P. P. S. I open this to say that the bellman is gone and that you must not expect it till the next post, so don't be surprised when you don't get it.

Master Humphrey does not feel himself at liberty to furnish his fair correspondent with the address of the gentleman in question, but he publishes her letter as a public appeal to his faith and gallantry.

MASTER HUMPHREY'S VISITER.

When I am in a thoughtful mood, I often succeed in diverting the current of some mournful reflections, by conjuring up a number of fanciful associations with the objects that surround me, and dwelling upon the scenes and characters they suggest.

I have been led by this habit to assign to every room in my house and every old staring portrait on its walls, a separate interest of its own. Thus, I am persuaded that a stately dame, terrible to behold in her rigid modesty, who hangs above the chimney-piece of my bed-room, is the former lady of the mansion. In the court-yard below, is a stone face of surpassing ugliness, which I have somehow—in a kind of jealousy, I am afraid—associated with her husband. Above my study, is a little room with ivy peeping through the lattice, from which I bring their daughter, a lovely girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age, and dutiful in all respects save one, that one being her devoted attachment to a young gentleman on the stairs, whose grandmother (degraded to a disused laundry in the garden) piques herself upon an old family quarrel, and is the implacable enemy of their love. With such materials as these, I work out many a little drama, whose chief merit is, that I can bring it to a happy end at will; I have so many of them on hand, that if on my return home one of these evenings I were to find some bluff old wight of two centuries ago comfortably seated in my easy chair, and a love-lorn damsel vainly appealing to his obdurate heart and leaning her white arm upon my clock itself, I verily believe I should only express my surprise that they had kept me waiting so long, and never honoured me with a call before.

I was, in such a mood as this, sitting in my garden yesterday morning, under the shade of a favourite tree, revelling in all the bloom and brightness about me, and feeling every sense of hope and enjoyment quickened by this most beautiful season of spring, when my meditations were interrupted by the unexpected appearance of my barber at the end of the walk, who I immediately saw was coming towards me with a hasty step that betokened something remarkable.

My barber is at all times a very brisk, bustling, active little man—for he is, as it were, chubby all over, without being stout or unwieldy—but yesterday his alacrity was so very uncommon that it quite took me by surprise. Nor could I fail to observe when he came up to me, that his grey eyes were twinkling in a most extraordinary manner, that his little red nose was in an unusual glow, that every line in his round bright face was twisted and curved into an expression of pleased surprise, and that his whole countenance was radiant with glee. I was still more surprised to see my housekeeper, who usually preserves a very staid air and stands somewhat upon her dignity, peeping round the hedge at the bottom of

the walk, and exchanging nods and smiles with the barber, who twice or thrice looked over his shoulder for that purpose. I could conceive no announcement to which these appearances could be the prelude, unless it were that they had married each other that morning.

I was, consequently, a little disappointed when it only came out that there was a gentleman in the house who wished to speak with me.

"And who is it?" said I.

The barber, with his face screwed up still tighter than before, replied that the gentleman would not send his name, but wished to see me. I pondered for a moment, wondering who this visiter might be, and I remarked that he embraced the opportunity of exchanging another nod with the housekeeper, who still lingered in the distance.

"Well!" said I, "bid the gentleman come here."

This seemed to be the consummation of the barber's hopes, for he turned sharp round, and actually ran away.

Now, my sight is not very good at a distance, and therefore when the gentleman first appeared on the walk, I was not quite clear whether he was a stranger to me or otherwise. He was an elderly gentleman, but came tripping along in the pleasantest manner conceivable, avoiding the garden-roller and the borders of the beds with inimitable dexterity, picking his way among the flower-pots, and smiling with unspeakable good-humour. Before he was half way up the walk he began to salute me; then I thought I knew him; but when he came towards me with his hat in his hand, the sun shining on his bald head, his bland face, his bright spectacles, his fawn-coloured tights, and his black gaiters—then my heart yearned towards him, and I felt quite certain that it was Mr. Pickwick.

"My dear sir"—said that gentleman as I rose to receive him, "pray be seated. Pray sit down. Now, do not stand on my account. I must insist upon it, really." With these words Mr. Pickwick gently pressed me down into my seat, and taking my hand in his, shook it again and again with a warmth of manner perfectly irresistible. I endeavoured to express in my welcome, something of that heartiness and pleasure which the sight of him awakened, and made him sit down beside me. All this time he kept alternately releasing my hand, and grasping it again, and surveying me through his spectacles with such a beaming countenance as I never beheld.

"You knew me directly!" said Mr. Pickwick. "What a pleasure it is to think that you knew me directly!"

I remarked that I had read his adventures very often, and that his features were quite familiar to me from the published portraits. As I thought it a good opportunity of adverting to the circumstance, I condoled with him upon the various libels on his character which had found their way into print. Mr. Pickwick shook his head and for a moment looked very indignant, but smiling again directly, added that no doubt I was acquainted with Cervantes' introduction to the second part of Don Quixote, and that it fully expressed his sentiments on the subject.

"But now," said Mr. Pickwick, "don't you wonder how I found you out?"

"I will never wonder, and with your good leave, will never know," said I, smiling in turn. "It is enough for me that you give me this gratification. I have not the least desire that you should tell me by what means I have obtained it."

"You are very kind," returned Mr. Pickwick, shaking me by the hand again, "you are so exactly what I expected! But for what particular purpose do you think I have sought you out, my dear sir? Now, what *do* you think I have come for?"

Mr. Pickwick put this question as though he were persuaded that it was morally impossible that I could by any means divine the deep purpose of his visit, and that it must be hidden from all human ken.—Therefore, although I was rejoiced to think that I anticipated his drift, I feigned to be ignorant of it, and after a brief consideration shook my head despairingly.

"What should you say," said Mr. Pickwick, laying the fore-finger of his left hand upon my coat-sleeve, and looking at me with his head thrown back, and a little on one side, "what should you say if I confessed that after reading your account of yourself and your little society, I had come here, a humble candidate for one of those empty chairs?"

"I should say," I returned, "that I know only of one circumstance which could still further endear that little society to me, and that would be the associating with it my old friend—for you must let me call you so—my old friend Mr. Pickwick."

As I made him this answer, every feature of Mr. Pickwick's face fused itself into one all-pervading expression of delight. After shaking me heartily by both hands at once, he patted me gently on the back, and then—I well understood why—coloured up to the eyes, and hoped with great earnestness of manner that he had not hurt me.

If he had, I would have been conten that he should have repeated the offence a hundred times rather than suppose so, but as he had not, I had no difficulty in chang-

ing the subject by making an enquiry which had been upon my lips twenty times already.

"You have not told me," said I, "anything about Sam Weller."

"Oh! Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "is the same as ever;—the same true faithful fellow that he ever was. What should I tell you about Sam, my dear sir, except that he is more indispensable to my happiness and comfort every day of my life?"

"And Mr. Weller, senior?" said I.

"Old Mr. Weller," returned Mr. Pickwick, "is in no respect more altered than Sam, unless it be that he is a little more opinionated than he was formerly, and perhaps at times more talkative. He spends a good deal of his time now in our neighbourhood, and has so constituted himself a part of my body-guard, that when I ask permission for Sam to have a seat in your kitchen on clock nights (supposing your three friends think me worthy to fill one of the chairs) I am afraid I must often include Mr. Weller, too."

I very readily pledged myself to give both Sam and his father a free admission to my house at all hours and seasons; and this point settled, we fell into a lengthy conversation which was carried on with as little reserve on both sides as if we had been intimate friends from our youth, and which conveyed to me the comfortable assurance that Mr. Pickwick's buoyancy of spirit, and indeed all his old cheerful characteristics, were wholly unimpaired. As he had spoken of the consent of my friends as being yet in abeyance, I repeatedly assured him that his proposal was certain to receive their most joyful sanction, and several times entreated that he would give me leave to introduce him to Jack Redburn and Mr. Miles (who were near at hand) without further ceremony.

To this proposal, however, Mr. Pickwick's delicacy would by no means allow him to accede, for he urged that his eligibility must be formally discussed, and that until this had been done, he could not think of obtruding himself further. The utmost I could obtain from him was, a promise that he would attend upon our next night of meeting, that I might have the pleasure of presenting him immediately on his election.

Mr. Pickwick having with many blushes placed in my hands a small roll of paper, which he termed his "qualification," put a great many questions to me touching my friends, and particularly Jack Redburn, whom he repeatedly termed "a fine fellow," and in whose favour I could see he was strongly predisposed. When I had satisfied him on these points, I took him up into my room that he might make acquaintance with the old chamber which is our place of meeting.

"And this," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping short, "is the clock! Dear me! And this is really the old clock!"

I thought he would never have come away from it. After advancing towards it softly, and laying his hand upon it with as much respect and as many smiling looks as if it were alive, he set himself to consider it in every possible direction, mounting on a chair to look at the top, now going down upon his knees to examine the bottom, now surveying the sides with his spectacles almost touching the case, and now trying to peep between it and the wall to get a slight view of the back. Then he would retire a pace or two and look up at the dial to see it go, and then draw near again and stand with his head on one side to hear it tick: never failing to glance towards me at intervals of a few seconds each, and nod his head with such complacent gratification as I am quite unable to describe. His admiration was not confined to the clock, either, but extended itself to every article in the room, and really, when he had gone through them every one, and at last sat himself down in all the six chairs, one after another, to try how they felt, I never saw such a picture of good-humour and happiness as he presented, from the top of his shining head down to the very last button of his gaiters.

I should have been well pleased, and should have had the utmost enjoyment of his company, if he had remained with me all day; but my favourite, striking the hour, reminded him that he must take his leave. I could not forbear telling him once more how glad he had made me, and we shook hands all the way down stairs.

We had no sooner arrived in the Hall, than my housekeeper gliding out of her little room (she had changed her gown and cap I observed) greeted Mr. Pickwick with her best smile and curtsy; and the barber, feigning to be accidently passing on his way out, made him a vast number of bows. —When the housekeeper curtsyed, Mr. Pickwick bowed with the utmost politeness, and when he bowed the housekeeper curtsyed again; between the housekeeper and the barber, I should say that Mr. Pickwick faced about and bowed with undiminished affability, fifty times at least.

I saw him to the door; an omnibus was at the moment passing the corner of the lane, which Mr. Pickwick hailed and ran after with extraordinary nimbleness. When he had got about half way he turned his head, and seeing that I was still looking after him and that I waved my hand, stop-

ped, evidently irresolute whether to come back and shake hands again, or go on. The man behind the omnibus shouted, and Mr. Pickwick ran a little way towards him: then he looked round at me, and ran a little way back again. Then there was another shout, and he turned round once more and ran the other way. After several of these vibrations, the man settled the question by taking Mr. Pickwick by the arm and putting him into the carriage, but his last action was to let down the window and wave his hat to me as it drove off.

I lost no time in opening the parcel he had left with me. The following were its contents:—

MR. PICKWICK'S TALE.

A good many years have passed away since old John Podgers lived in the town of Windsor, where he was born, and where in course of time he came to be comfortably and snugly buried. You may be sure that in the time of King James the First, Windsor was a very quaint queer old town, and you may take it upon my authority, that John Podgers was a very quaint queer old fellow; consequently he and Windsor fitted each other to a nicety, and seldom parted company, even for half a day.

John Podgers was broad, sturdy, Dutch-built, short, and a very hard eater, as men of his figure often are. Being a hard sleeper, likewise, he divided his time pretty equally between these two recreations, always falling asleep when he had done eating, and always taking another turn at the trencher when he had done sleeping; by which means he grew more corpulent and more drowsy every day of his life. Indeed it used to be currently reported that when he sauntered up and down the sunny side of the street before dinner (as he never failed to do in fair weather) he enjoyed his soundest nap; but many people held this to be a fiction, as he had several times been seen to look after fat oxen on market days, and had even been heard by persons of good credit and reputation to chuckle at the sight, and say to himself with great glee, "Live beef, live beef!" It was upon this evidence that the wisest people in Windsor (beginning with the local authorities of course) held that John Podgers was a man of strong sound sense—not what is called smart, perhaps, and it might be of a rather lazy and apoplectic turn, but still a man of solid parts, and one who meant much more than he cared to show. This impression was confirmed by a very dignified way he had of shaking his head and imparting at the same time a pendulous motion to his double chin; in short he passed for one of those people who being plunged into the Thames, would make no vain efforts to set it afire, but would straightway flop down to the bottom with a deal of gravity, and be highly respected in consequence by all good men.

Being well to do in the world, and a peaceful widower—having a great appetite, which, as he could afford to gratify it, was a luxury and no inconvenience, and a power of going to sleep, which, as he had no occasion to keep awake, was a most enviable faculty—you will readily suppose that John Podgers was a happy man. But appearances are often deceptive when they least seem so, and the truth is, that notwithstanding his extreme sleekness he was rendered uneasy in his mind, and exceedingly uncomfortable by a constant apprehension that beset him night and day.

You know very well that in those times there flourished divers evil old women who under the name of Witches, spread great disorder through the land, and inflicted various dismal tortures upon Christian men: sticking pins and needles into them when they least expected it, and causing them to walk in the air with their feet upwards to the great terror of their wives and families, who were naturally very much disconcerted when the master of the house unexpectedly came home, knocking at the door with his heels and combing his hair on the scraper. These were their commonest pranks, but they every day played a hundred others, of which none were less objectionable and many were much more so, being improper besides; the result was that vengeance was denounced against all old women, with whom even the king himself had no sympathy (as he certainly ought to have had) for with his own most Gracious hand he penned a most Gracious consignment of them to everlasting wrath, and devised most Gracious means for their confusion and slaughter, in virtue whereof, scarcely a day passed but one witch at the least was most graciously hanged, drowned or roasted in some part of his dominions. Still the

press teemed with strange and terrible news from the North or the South or the East or the West relative to witches and their unhappy victims in some corner of the country, and the Public's hair stood on end to that degree that it lifted its hat off its head, and made its face pale with terror.

You may believe that the little town of Windsor did not escape the general contagion. The inhabitants boiled a witch on the King's birth-day, and sent a bottle of the broth to court, with a dutiful address expressive of their loyalty. The King being rather frightened by the present, piously bestowed it upon the Archbishop of Canterbury, and returned an answer to the address wherein he gave them golden rules for discovering witches, and laid great stress upon certain protecting charms, and especially horse-shoes. Immediately the towns-people went to work nailing up horse-shoes over every door, and so many anxious parents apprenticed their children to farriers, to keep them out of harm's way, that it became quite a genteel trade and flourished exceedingly.

In the midst of all this bustle John Podgers ate and slept as usual, but shook his head a great deal oftener than was his custom, and was observed to look at the oxen less, and at the old women more. He had a little shelf put up in his sitting-room, whereon was displayed in a row which grew longer every week all the witchcraft literature of the time; he grew learned in charms and exorcisms, hinted at certain questionable females on broomsticks whom he had seen from his chamber window riding in the air at night, and was in constant terror of being bewitched. At length from perpetually dwelling upon this one idea which being alone in his head had it all its own way, the fear of witches became the single passion of his life. He, who up to that time had never known what it was to dream, began to have visions of witches whenever he fell asleep; waking, they were incessantly present to his imagination likewise; and sleeping or waking he had not a moment's peace. He began to set witch-traps in the highway, and was often seen lying in wait round the corner for hours together, to watch their effect. These engines were of simple construction, usually consisting of two straws disposed in the form of a cross, or a piece of a bible-cover with a pinch of salt upon it; but they were infallible, and if an old woman chanced to stumble over them (as not unfrequently happened, the chosen spot being a broken and stony place) John started from a doze, pounced out upon her, and hung round her neck till assistance arrived, when she was immediately carried away and drowned. By dint of constantly inveigling old ladies and disposing of them in this summary manner, he acquired the reputation of a great public character, and as he received no harm in these pursuits beyond a scratched face or so, he came in course of time to be considered witch-proof.

There was but one person who entertained the least doubt of John Podgers's gifts, and that person was his own nephew, a wild roving young fellow of twenty who had been brought up in his uncle's house and lived there still — that is to say when he was at home, which was not as often as it might have been. As he was an apt scholar, it was he who read aloud every fresh piece of strange and terrible intelligence that John Podgers bought; and this he always did of an evening in the little porch in front of the house, round which the neighbours would flock in crowds to hear the direful news — for people like to be frightened, and when they can be frightened for nothing and at another man's expense, they like it all the better.

One fine midsummer evening, a group of persons were gathered in this place listening intently to Will Marks (that was the nephew's name) as with his cap very much on one side, his arm coiled slyly round the waist of a pretty girl who sat beside him, and his face screwed into a comical expression intended to represent extreme gravity, he read — with Heaven knows how many embellishments of his own — a dismal account of a gentlema[n] down in Northamptonshire under the in[-] fluence of witchcraft and taken forcibl[y] possession of by the Devil, who was pla[y-] ing his very self with him. John Podg[ers,] in a high sugar-loaf hat and short clo[ak,] filled the opposite seat and surveyed t[he] auditory with a look of mingled pride a[nd] horror very edifying to see, while th[e] hearers with their heads thrust forwar[d] and their mouths open, listened and trembled, and hoped there was a great deal more to come. Sometimes Will stopped for an instant to look round upon his eager audience, and then with a more comical expression of face than before and a settling of himself comfortably which included a squeeze of the young lady before mentioned, he launched into some new wonder surpassing all the others.

The setting sun shed his last golden rays upon this little party, who, absorbed in their present occupation, took no heed of the approach of night or the glory in which the day went down, when the sound of a horse approaching at a good round trot, in

vading the silence of the hour, caused the reader to make a sudden stop and the listeners to raise their heads in wonder. Nor was their wonder diminished when a horseman dashed up to the porch, and abruptly checking his steed, inquired where one John Podgers dwelt.

"Here!" cried a dozen voices, while a dozen hands pointed out sturdy John, still asking in the terrors of the pamphlet.

The rider giving his bridle to one of those who surrounded him, dismounted, and approached John hat in hand, but with great haste.

"Whence come ye?" said John.

"From Kingston, Master."

"And wherefore?"

"On most pressing business."

"Of what nature?"

"Witchcraft."

Witchcraft! Everybody looked aghast at the breathless messenger, and the breathless messenger looked equally aghast at everybody—except Will Marks who finding himself unobserved, not only squeezed the young lady again, but kissed her twice. Surely he must have been bewitched himself, or he never could have done it—and the young lady too, or she never would have let him.

"Witchcraft!" cried Will, drowning the sound of his last kiss, which was rather a loud one.

The messenger turned towards him, and with a frown repeated the word more solemnly than before, then told his errand, which was, in brief, that the people of Kingston had been greatly terrified for some nights past by hideous revels, held by witches beneath the gibbet within a mile of the town, and related and deposed to by chance wayfarers who had passed within ear-shot of the spot—that the sound of their voices in their wild orgies had been plainly heard by many persons—that three old women laboured under strong suspicion, and that precedents had been consulted and solemn council had, and it was found that to identify the hags some single person must watch upon the spot alone—that no single person had the courage to perform the task—and that he had been despatched express to solicit John Podgers to undertake it that very night, as being a man of great renown, who bore a charmed life, and was proof against unholy spells.

John received this communication with much composure, and said in a few words, that it would have afforded him inexpressible pleasure to do the Kingston people so slight a service, if it were not for his unfortunate propensity to fall asleep, which no man regretted more than himself upon the present occasion, but which quite settled the question. Nevertheless, he said, there *was* a gentleman present (and here

he looked very hard at a tall farrier) who having been engaged all his life in the manufacture of horse-shoes must be quite invulnerable to the power of witches, and who, he had no doubt, from his known reputation for bravery and good nature, would readily accept the commission. The farrier politely thanked him for his good opinion, which it would always be his study to deserve, but added that with regard to the present little matter he couldn't think of it on any account, as his departing on such an errand would certainly occasion the instant death of his wife, to whom as they all knew he was tenderly attached. Now, so far from this circumstance being notorious, everybody had suspected the reverse, as the farrier was in the habit of beating his lady rather more than tender husbands usually do; all the married men present, however, applauded his resolution with great vehemence, and one and all declared that they would stop at home and die if needful (which happily it was not) in defence of their lawful partners.

This burst of enthusiasm over, they began to look as by one consent toward Will Marks, who with his cap more on one side than ever, sat watching the proceedings with extraordinary unconcern. He had never been heard openly to express his disbelief in witches, but had often cut such jokes at their expense as left it to be inferred, publicly stating on several occasions that he considered a broomstick an inconvenient charger, and one especially unsuited to the dignity of the female character, and indulging in other free remarks of the same tendency, to the great amusement of his wild companions.

As they looked at Will, they began to whisper and murmur among themselves; and at length one man cried, — "Why don't you ask Will Marks?"

As this was what everybody had been thinking of, they all took up the word, and cried in concert, "Ah! why don't you ask Will!"

"*He* don't care," said the farrier.

"Not he," added another voice in the crowd.

"He don't believe in it, you know," sneered a little man with a yellow face, and a taunting nose and chin, which he thrust out from under the arm of a long man before him.

"Besides," said a red-faced gentleman, with a gruff voice, "he's a single man."

"That's the point!" said the farrier; and all the married men murmured, ah! that was it, and they only wished they were single themselves; they would show him what spirit was, very soon.

The messenger looked towards Will Marks, beseechingly.

"It will be a wet night, friend, and my grey nag is tired after yesterday's work—"

Here there was a general titter.

"But," resumed Will, looking about him with a smile, "if nobody else puts in a better claim to go for the credit of the town, I am your man, and I would be if I had to go afoot. In five minutes I shall be in the saddle, unless I am depriving any worthy gentleman here, of the honour of the adventure, which I wouldn't do for the world."

But here arose a double difficulty, for not only did John Podgers combat the resolution with all the words he had, which were not many, but the young lady combated it, too, with all the tears she had, which were very many indeed. Will, however, being inflexible, parried his uncle's objections with a joke, and coaxed the young lady into a smile in three short whispers. As it was plain that he would go and set his mind upon it, John Podgers offered him a few first-rate charms out of his own pocket, which he dutifully declined to accept, and the young lady gave him a kiss, which he also returned.

"You see what a rare thing it is to be married," said Will, "and how careful and considerate all these husbands are. There's not a man among them but his heart is leaping to forestal me in this adventure, and yet a strong sense of duty keeps him back. The husbands in this little town are a pattern to the world, and so must the wives be, too, for that matter, or they could never boast half the influence they have!"

Waiting for no reply to this sarcasm, he snapped his fingers and withdrew into the house, and thence into the stable, while some busied themselves in refreshing the messenger, and others in baiting his steed. In less than the specified time, he returned by another way, with a good cloak hanging over his arm, a good sword girded by his side, and leading his good horse caparisoned for the journey.

"Now," said Will, leaping into the saddle at a bound, "up and away. — Upon your mettle, friend, and push on. Good night!"

He kissed his hand to the girl, nodded to his drowsy uncle, waved his cap to the rest —and off they flew, pell-mell, as if all the witches in England were in their horses' legs. They were out of sight in a minute.

The men who were left behind, shook their heads doubtfully, stroked their chins, and shook their heads again. The farrier said, that certainly Will Marks was a good horseman, nobody should ever say he denied that, but he was rash, very rash, and there

was no telling what the end of it might be; what did he go for, that was what he wanted to know? He wished the young fellow no harm, but why did he go? Everybody echoed these words, and shook their heads again, having done which they wished John Podgers good night, and straggled home to bed.

The Kingston people were in their first sleep, when Will Marks and his conductor rode through the town and up to the door of a house, where sundry grave functionaries were assembled, anxiously expecting the arrival of the renowned Podgers.—They were a little disappointed to find a gay young man in his place; but they put the best face upon the matter, and gave him full instructions how he was to conceal himself behind the gibbet, and watch and listen to the witches, and how at a certain time he was to burst forth and cut and slash among them vigorously, so that the suspected parties might be found bleeding in their beds next day, and thoroughly confounded. They gave him a great quantity of wholesome advice, besides, and—which was more to the purpose with Will—a good supper. All these things being done, and midnight nearly come, they sallied forth to show him the spot where he was to keep his dreary vigil.

The night was by this time dark and threatening. There was a rumbling of distant thunder, and a low sighing of wind among the trees, which was very dismal. The potentates of the town kept so uncommonly close to Will that they trod upon his toes, or stumbled against his ancles, or nearly tripped up his heels at every step he took; and besides these annoyances, their teeth chattered so with fear that he seemed to be accompanied by a dirge of castanets.

At last they made a halt at the opening of a lonely desolate space, and pointing to a black object at some distance, asked Will if he saw that, yonder.

"Yes," he replied. "What then?"

Informing him abruptly that it was the gibbet where he was to watch, they wished him good night in an extremely friendly manner, and ran back as fast as their feet would carry them.

Will walked boldly to the gibbet, and glancing upward when he came under it, saw—certainly with satisfaction—that it was empty, and that nothing dangled from the top but some iron chains which swung mournfully to and fro as they were moved by the breeze. After a careful survey of every quarter, he determined to take his station with his face towards the town; both because that would place him with his back to the wind, and because if any trick or surprise were attempted, it would probably come from that direction in the first instance. Having taken these precautions, he wrapped his cloak about him so that it left the handle of his sword free, and ready to his hand, and leaning against the gallows-tree, with his cap not quite so much on one side as it had been before, took up his position for the night.

SECOND CHAPTER OF MR. PICKWICK'S TALE.

We left Will Marks leaning under the gibbet, with his face towards the town, scanning the distance with a keen eye which sought to pierce the darkness, and catch the earliest glimpse of any person or persons that might approach towards him. But all was quiet, and, save the howling of the wind as it swept across the heath in gusts, and the creaking of the chains that dangled above his head, there was no sound to break the sullen stillness of the night. After half an hour or so, this monotony became more disconcerting to Will than the most furious uproar would have been, and he heartily wished for some one antagonist with whom he might have a fair stand-up fight, if it were only to warm himself.

Truth to tell, it was a bitter wind, and seemed to blow to the very heart of a man whose blood, heated but now with rapid riding, was the more sensitive to the chilling blast. Will was a daring fellow and cared not a jot for hard knocks or sharp blades, but he could not persuade himself to move or walk about, having just that vague expectation of a sudden assault which made it a comfortable thing to have something at his back, even though that something were a gallows-tree. He had no great faith in the superstitions of the age, still such of them as occurred to him did not serve to lighten the time or render his situation the more endurable. He remembered how witches were said to repair at that ghostly hour to church-yards and gibbets, and such like dismal spots, to pluck the bleeding mandrake, or scrape the flesh from dead men's bones, as choice ingredients for their spells; how, stealing by night to lonely places, they dug graves with their finger-nails, or anointed themselves before riding in the air, with a delicate pomatum made of the fat of infants newly boiled. These, and many other fabled practices of a no less agreeable nature, and all having some reference to the circumstances in which he was placed, passed and repassed in quick succession through the mind of Will Marks, and adding a shadowy dread to that distrust and watchfulness which his situation inspired, rendered it upon the whole sufficiently uncomfortable. As he had foreseen, too, the rain began to descend heavily, and driving before the wind in a thick mist obscured even those few objects which the darkness of the night had before imperfectly revealed.

"Look!" shrieked a voice, "Great Heaven, it has fallen down and stands erect as if it lived!"

The speaker was close behind him—the voice was almost at his ear. Will threw off his cloak, drew his sword, and darting swiftly round, seized a woman by the wrist, who recoiling from him with a dreadful shriek, fell struggling upon her knees. Another woman clad, like her whom he had grasped, in mourning garments, stood rooted to the spot on which they were, gazing upon his face with wild and glaring eyes that quite appalled him.

"Say," cried Will, when they had confronted each other thus, for sometime,—"what are ye?"

"Say what are *you*," returned the woman, "who trouble even this obscene resting-place of the dead, and strip the gibbet of its honoured burden?—Where is the body?"

He looked in wonder and affright from the woman who questioned him, to the other whose arm he clutched.

"Where is the body?" repeated his questioner, more firmly than before; "you wear no livery which marks you for the hireling of the government. You are no friend to us, or I should recognise you; for the friends of such as we are few in number. What are you then, and wherefore are you here?"

"I am no foe to the distressed and helpless," said Will.—"Are ye among that number? ye should be by your looks."

"We are!" was the answer.

"It is ye who have been wailing and weeping here, under cover of the night?" said Will.

"It is," replied the woman, sternly, and pointing, as she spoke, towards her companion, "she mourns a husband and I a brother. Even the bloody law that wreaks its vengeance on the dead, does not make that a crime; and if it did 'twould be alike to us who are past its fear or favour."

Will glanced at the two females, and could barely discern that the one whom he addressed was much the elder, and that the other was young and of a slight figure. Both were deadly pale, their garments wet and torn, their hair dishevelled and streaming in the wind, themselves bowed down with grief and misery; their whole appearance most dejected, wretched, and forlorn. A sight so different from any he had expected to encounter touched him to the quick, and all idea of anything but their pitiable condition, vanished before it.

"I am a rough, blunt yeoman," said Will; "why I came here is told in a word; you have been overheard at a distance in the silence of the night, and I have undertaken a watch for hags or spirits. I came here expecting an adventure, and prepared to go through with any. If there be aught that I can do to help or aid you, name it, and on the faith of a man who can be secret and trusty, I will stand by you to the death."

"How comes this gibbet to be empty?" asked the elder female.

"I swear to you," replied Will, "that I know as little as yourself. But this I know, that when I came here an hour ago, or so, it was as it is now; and if, as I gather from your question, it was not so last night, sure I am that it has been secretly disturbed without the knowledge of the folks in yonder town. Bethink you, therefore, whether you may have no friends in league with you, or with him on whom the law has done its worst, by whom these sad remains have been removed for burial."

The women spoke together, and Will retired a pace or two while they conversed apart. He could hear them sob and moan, and saw that they wrung their hands in fruitless agony. He could make out little that they said, but between whiles he gathered enough to assure him that his suggestion was not very wide of the mark, and that they not only suspected by whom the body had been removed, but also whither it had been conveyed. When they had been in conversation a long time, they turned towards him once more. This time the younger female spoke.

"You have offered us your help?"

"I have."

"And given a pledge that you are still willing to redeem?"

"Yes. So far as I may, keeping all plots and conspiracies at arm's length."

"Follow us, friend."

Will, whose self-possession was now quite restored, needed no second bidding, but with his drawn sword in his hand, and his cloak so muffled over his left arm as to serve for a kind of shield without offering any impediment to its free action, suffered them to lead the way. Through mud and mire and wind and rain, they walked in silence a full mile. At length they turned into a dark lane, where, suddenly starting out from beneath some trees where he had taken shelter, a man appeared having in his charge three saddled horses. One of these (his own apparently) in obedience to a whisper from the women, he consigned to Will, who seeing that they mounted, mounted also. Then without a word spoken they rode on together, leaving the attendant behind.

They made no halt nor slackened their pace until they arrived near Putney. At a large wooden house which stood apart from any other, they alighted, and giving their horses to one who was already waiting, passed in by a side door, and so up some narrow creaking stairs into a small panelled chamber, where Will was left alone. He had not been here very long, when the door was softly opened, and there entered to him a cavalier whose face was concealed beneath a black mask.

Will stood upon his guard, and scrutinised this figure from head to foot. The form was that of a man pretty far advanced in life, but of a firm and stately carriage. His dress was of a rich and costly kind, but so soiled and disordered that it was scarcely to be recognised for one of those gorgeous suits which the expensive taste and fashion of the time prescribed for men of any rank or station. He was booted and spurred, and bore about him even as many tokens of the state of the roads as Will himself. All this he noted while the eyes behind the mask regarded him with equal attention. This survey over, the cavalier broke silence.

"Thou 'rt young and bold, and wouldst be richer than thou art?"

"The two first I am" returned Will. "The last I have scarcely thought of. But be it so. Say that I would be richer than I am; what then?"

"The way lies before thee now," replied the Mask.

"Show it me."

"First let me inform thee, that thou wert brought here to-night lest thou shouldst too soon have told thy tale to those who placed thee on the watch."

"I thought as much when I followed," said Will. "But I am no blab, not I."

"Good," returned the Mask. "Now listen. He who was to have executed the enterprise of burying that body, which as thou hast suspected was taken down to-night, has left us in our need."

Will nodded, and thought within himself that if the Mask were to attempt to play any tricks, the first eyelet-hole on the left-hand side of his doublet, counting from the buttons up the front, would be a very good place in which to pink him neatly.

"Thou art here, and the emergency is desperate. I propose his task to thee. Convey the body (now coffined in this house) by means that I shall show, to the church of Saint Dunstan, in London, to-morrow night, and thy service shall be richly paid. Thou 'rt about to ask whose

corpse it is. Seek not to know. I warn thee, seek not to know. Felons hang in chains on every moor and heath. Believe, as others do, that this was one, and ask no further. The murders of state policy, its victims or avengers, had best remain unknown to such as thee."

"The mystery of this service," said Will, "bespeaks its danger. What is the reward?"

"One hundred golden unities," replied the cavalier. "The danger to one who cannot be recognised as the friend of a fallen cause is not great, but there is some hazard to be run. Decide between that and the reward."

"What if I refuse?" said Will.

"Depart in peace, in God's name," returned the Mask in a melancholy tone, "and keep our secret: remembering that those who brought thee here were crushed and stricken women, and that those who bade thee go free could have had thy life with one word, and no man the wiser."

Men were readier to undertake desperate adventures in those times, than they are now. In this case the temptation was great, and the punishment even in case of detection was not likely to be very severe, as Will came of a loyal stock, and his uncle was in good repute, and a passable tale to account for his possession of the body and his ignorance of the identity, might be easily devised. The cavalier explained that a covered cart had been prepared for the purpose; that the time of departure could be arranged so that he should reach London Bridge, at dusk, and proceed through the City after the day had closed in; that people would be ready at his journey's end to place the coffin in a vault without a minute's delay; that officious inquirers in the streets would be easily repelled by the tale that he was carrying for interment the corpse of one who had died of the plague; and in short showed him every reason why he should succeed and none why he should fail. After a time they were joined by another gentleman, masked like the first, who added new arguments to those which had been already urged; the wretched wife too added her tears and prayers to their calmer representations; and in the end Will, moved by compassion and good-nature, by a love of the marvellous, by a mischievous anticipation of the terrors of the Kingston people, when he should be missing next day, and finally by the prospect of gain, took upon himself the task, and devoted all his energies to its successful execution.

The following night when it was quite dark, the hollow echoes of old London Bridge, responded to the rumbling of the cart which contained the ghastly load, the object of Will Marks's care. Sufficiently disguised to attract no attention by his garb, Will walked at the horse's head, as unconcerned as a man could be who was sensible that he had now arrived at the most dangerous part of his undertaking, but full of boldness and confidence.

It was now eight o'clock. After nine, none could walk the streets without danger of their lives; and even at this hour, robberies and murder were of no uncommon occurrence. The shops upon the bridge were all closed; the low wooden arches thrown across the way were like so many black pits, in every one of which ill-favoured fellows lurked in knots of three or four; some standing upright against the wall lying in wait, others skulking in gateways and thrusting out ther uncombed heads and scowling eyes, others crossing and recrossing and constantly jostling both horse and man to provoke a quarrel, others stealing away and summoning their companions in a low whistle. Once, even in that short passage, there was the noise of scuffling and the clash of swords behind him; but Will, who knew the city and its ways, kept straight on and scarcely turned his head.

The streets being unpaved, the rain of the night before had converted them into a perfect quagmire, which the splashing water-spouts from the gables, and the filth and offal cast from the different houses, swelled in no small degree. These odious matters being left to putrefy in the close and heavy air, emitted an insupportable stench, to which every court and passage poured forth a contribution of its own.—Many parts even of the main streets, with their projecting stories tottering overhead and nearly shutting out the sky, were more like huge chimneys than open ways. At the corners of some of these, great bonfires were burning to prevent infection from the plague, of which it was rumoured that some citizens had lately died; and few, who availing themselves of the light thus afforded, paused for a moment to look around them, would have been disposed to doubt the existence of the disease, or wonder at its dreadful visitations.

But it was not in such scenes as these, or even in the deep and miry road, that Will Marks found the chief obstacles to his progress. There were kites and ravens feeding in the streets (the only scavengers the city kept) who scented what he carried, followed the cart or fluttered on its top, and croaked their knowledge if its burden and their ravenous appetite for prey. There were distant fires, where the poor

wood and plaster tenements wasted fiercely, and whither crowds made their way, clamouring eagerly for plunder, beating down all who came within their reach, and yelling like devils let loose. There were single-handed men flying from bands of ruffians, who pursued them with naked weapons, and hunted them savagely; there were drunken desperate robbers issuing from their dens and staggering through the open streets where no man dared molest them; there were vagabond servitors returning from the Bear Garden, where had been good sport that day, dragging after them their torn and bleeding dogs, or leaving them to die and rot upon the road. Nothing was abroad but cruelty, violence, and disorder.

Many were the interruptions which Will Marks encountered from these stragglers, and many the narrow escapes he made. Now some stout bully would take his seat upon the cart, insisting to be driven to his own home; and now two or three men would come down upon him together, and demand that on peril of his life he showed them what he had inside. Then a party of the city watch upon their rounds would draw across the road, and not satisfied with his tale, question him closely and revenge themselves by a little cuffing and hustling for maltreatment sustained at other hands that night. All these assailants had to be rebutted, some by fair words, some by foul, and some by blows. But Will Marks was not the man to be stopped or turned back now he had penetrated so far, and though he got on slowly, still he made his way down Fleet-street and reached the church at last.

As had been forewarned, all was in readiness. Directly he stopped, the coffin was removed by four men, who appeared so suddenly, that they seemed to have started from the earth. A fifth mounted the cart, and scarcely allowing Will time to snatch from it a little bundle containing such of his own clothes as he had thrown off on assuming his disguise, drove briskly away. Will never saw cart or man again.

He followed the body into the church, and it was well he lost no time in doing so, for the door was immediately closed.—There was no light in the building save that which came from a couple of torches borne by two men, in cloaks, who stood upon the brink of a vault. Each supported a female figure, and all observed a profound silence.

By this dim and solemn glare, which made Will feel as though light itself were dead, and its tomb the dreary arches that frowned above, they placed the coffin in the vault, with uncovered heads, and closed it up.

One of the torch-bearers then turned to Will and stretched forth his hand in which was a purse of gold. Something told him directly that those were the same eyes he had seen beneath the mask.

"Take it," said the cavalier, in a low voice, "and be happy. Though these have been hasty obsequies, and no priest has blessed the work, there will not be the less peace with thee hereafter, for having laid his bones beside those of his little children. Keep thy own counsel, for thy sake no less than ours, and God be with thee!"

"The blessing of a widowed mother on thy head, good friend!" cried the younger lady through her tears; "the blessing of one who has now no hope or rest but in this grave!"

Will stood with the purse in his hand, and involuntarily made a gesture as though he would return it; for though a thoughtless fellow, he was of a frank and generous nature. But the two gentlemen extinguishing their torches, cautioned him to be gone, as their common safety would be endangered by a longer delay; and at the same time their retreating footsteps sounded through the church. He turned, therefore, towards the point at which he had entered, and seeing by a faint gleam in the distance that the door was again partially open, groped his way towards it, and so passed into the street.

Meantime the local authorities of Kingston had kept watch and ward all the previous night, fancying every now and then that dismal shrieks were borne towards them on the wind, and frequently winking to each other and drawing closer to the fire as they drank the health of the lonely sentinel, upon whom a clerical gentleman present was especially severe by reason of his levity and youthful folly. Two or three of the gravest in company, who were of a theological turn, propounded to him the question whether such a character was not but poorly armed for single combat with the devil, and whether he himself would not have been a stronger opponent; but the clerical gentleman, sharply reproving them for their presumption in discussing such questions, clearly showed that a fitter champion than Will could scarcely have been selected, not only for that being a child of Satan, he was the less likely to be alarmed by the appearance of his own father, but because Satan himself would be at his ease in such company, and would not scruple to kick up his heels to an extent which it was quite certain he would never venture before clerical eyes, under whose influence (as was notorious) he became quite a tame and milk-and-water character.

But when next morning arrived and with it no Will Marks, and when a strong party repairing to the spot, as a strong party ventured to do in broad day, found Will gone and the gibbet empty, matters grew serious indeed. The day passing away and no news arriving, and the night going on also without any intelligence, the thing grew more tremendous still; in short the neighbourhood worked itself up to such a comfortable pitch of mystery and horror, that it is a great question whether the general feeling was not one of excessive disappointment when, on the second morning, Will Marks returned.

However this may be, back Will came in a very cool and collected state, and appearing not to trouble himself much about anybody except old John Podgers, who having been sent for, was sitting in the Town Hall, crying slowly and dozing between whiles. Having embraced his uncle and assured him of his safety, Will mounted on a table and told his story to the crowd.

And surely they would have been the most unreasonable crowd that ever assembled together, if they had been in the least respect disappointed with the tale he told them, for besides describing the Witches' Dance to the minutest motion of their legs, and performing it in character on the table, with the assistance of a broomstick, he related how they had carried off the body in a copper cauldron, and so bewitched him that he lost his senses until he found himself lying under a hedge at least ten miles off, whence he had straightway returned as they then beheld. The story gained such universal applause that it soon afterwards brought down express from London, the great witch-finder of the age, the Heaven-born Hopkins, who having examined Will closely on several points, pronounced it the most extraordinary and the best accredited witch story ever known, under which title it was published at the Three-Bibles, on London Bridge, in small quarto, with a view of the cauldron from an original drawing, and a portrait of the clerical gentleman as he sat by the fire.

On one point, Will was particularly careful; and that was to describe for the witches he had seen, three impossible old females whose likenesses never were or will be. Thus he saved the lives of the suspected parties, and of all other old women who were dragged before him to be identified.

This circumstance occasioned John Podgers much grief and sorrow, until happening one day to cast his eyes upon his housekeeper, and observing her to be plainly afflicted with rheumatism, he procured her

to be burnt as an undoubted witch. For this service to the state, he was immediately knighted, and became from that time Sir John Podgers.

Will Marks never gained any clue to the mystery in which he had been an actor, nor did any inscription in the church which he often visited afterwards, nor any of the limited inquiries that he dared to make, yield him the least assistance. As he kept his own secret, he was compelled to spend the gold discreetly and sparingly. In course of time he married the young lady of whom I have already told you, whose maiden name is not recorded, with whom he led a prosperous and happy life. Years and years after this adventure, it was his wont to tell her upon a stormy night, that it was a great comfort to him to think that those bones, to whomsoever they might have once belonged, were not bleaching in the troubled air, but were mouldering away with the dust of their own kith and kindred in a quiet grave.

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF MASTER HUMPHREY'S VISITER.

Being very full of Mr. Pickwick's application, and highly pleased with the compliment he had paid me, it will be readily supposed that long before our next night of meeting, I communicated it to my three friends, who unanimously voted his admission into our body. We all looked forward with some impatience to the occasion which would enrol him among us, but I am greatly mistaken if Jack Redburn and myself were not by many degrees the most impatient of the party.

At length the night came, and a few minutes after ten Mr. Pickwick's knock was heard at the street-door. He was shown into a lower room, and I directly took my crooked stick and went to accompany him up stairs, in order that he might be presented with all honour and formality.

"Mr. Pickwick," said I on entering the room, "I am rejoiced to see you—rejoiced to believe that this is but the opening of a long series of visits to this house, and but the beginning of a close and lasting friendship."

That gentleman made a suitable reply with a cordiality and frankness peculiarly his own, and glanced with a smile towards two persons behind the door, whom I had not at first observed, and whom I immediately recognised as Mr. Samuel Weller and his father.

It was a warm evening, but the elder Mr. Weller was attired, notwithstanding, in a most capacious great coat, and had his chin enveloped in a large speckled shawl, such as is usually worn by stage-coachmen on active service. He looked very rosy and very stout, especially about the legs, which appeared to have been compressed into his top-boots with some difficulty. His broad-brimmed hat he held under his left arm, and with the fore-finger of his right hand he touched his forehead a great many times, in acknowledgment of my presence.

"I am very glad to see you in such good health, Mr. Weller," said I.

"Why, thankee sir," returned Mr. Weller, "the axle an't broke yet. We keeps up a steady pace—not too sewere but vith a moderate degree o' friction—and the consekens is that ve 're still a runnin' and comes in to the time, reg'lar.—My son Samivel sir, as you may have read on in history," added Mr. Weller, introducing his first-born.

I received Sam very graciously, but before he could say a word, his father struck in again.

"Samivel Veller, sir," said the old gentleman, "has con-ferred upon me the ancient title o' grandfather, vich had long laid dormouse, and wos s'posed to be nearly hex-tinct, in our family. Sammy, relate a anecdote o' vun o' them boys—that 'ere little anecdote about young Tony, sayin' as he *vould* smoke a pipe unbeknown to his mother."

"Be quiet, can't you?" said Sam, "I never see such a old magpie—never!"

"That 'ere Tony is the blessedest boy," —said Mr. Weller, heedless of this rebuff, "the blessedest boy as ever *I* see in *my* days! of all the charmin'est infants as ever I heerd tell on, includin' them as wos kivered over by the robin red-breasts arter they'd committed sooicide with blackberries, there never wos any like that 'ere little Tony. He 's alvays a playin' vith a quart pot that boy is! To see him a settin' down on the door step pretending to drink out of it, and fetching a long breath artervards, and smoking a bit of fire-vood and sayin' 'Now I 'm grandfather'—to see him a doin' that at two year old is better than any play as wos ever wrote. 'Now I 'm grandfather!' He wouldn't take a pint pot if you wos to make him a present on it, but he gets his quart and then he says, 'Now I 'm grandfather!'"

Mr. Weller was so overpowered by this picture that he straightway fell into a most alarming fit of coughing, which must certainly have been attended with some fatal

result, but for the dexterity and promptitude of Sam, who taking a firm grasp of the shawl just under his father's chin, shook him to and fro with great violence, at the same time administering some smart blows between his shoulders. By this curious mode of treatment Mr. Weller was finally recovered, but with a very crimson face and in a state of great exhaustion.

"He'll do now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, who had been in some alarm himself.

"He'll do sir!" cried Sam, looking reproachfully at his parent, "Yes, he *will* do one o' these days—he'll do for his-self and then he'll wish he hadn't. Did anybody ever see sich a inconsiderate old file,—laughing into conwulsions afore company, and stamping on the floor as if he'd brought his own carpet vith him and wos under a wager to punch the pattern out in a given time? He'll begin again in a minute. There—he's a goin' off—I said he would!"

In fact, Mr. Weller, whose mind was still running upon his precocious grandson, was seen to shake his head from side to side, while a laugh, working like an earthquake, below the surface, produced various extraordinary appearances in his face, chest, and shoulders, the more alarming because unaccompanied by any noise whatever. These emotions, however, gradually subsided, and after three or four short relapses, he wiped his eyes with the cuff of his coat, and looked about him with tolerable composure.

"Afore the governor vith-draws," said Mr. Weller, "there is a pint, respecting vich Sammy has a qvestion to ask. Vile that qvestion is a perwadin this here conwersation, p'raps the genl'mem vill permit me to re-tire."

"Wot are you goin' away for?" demanded Sam, seizing his father by the coat tail.

"I never see such a undootiful boy as you, Samivel," returned Mr. Weller.—"Didn't you make a solemn promise,—amountin' almost to a speeches o' wow,—that you'd put that ere qvestion on my account?"

"Well, I'm agreeable to do it," said Sam; "but not if you go cuttin' away like that, as the bull turned round and mildly observed to the drover ven they wos a goadin' him into the butcher's door. The fact is, sir," said Sam, addressing me, "that he wants to know somethin' respectin' that ere lady as is housekeeper here."

"Ay! What is that?"

"Vy, sir," said Sam, grinning still more, "he vishes to know vether she—"

"In short," interposed 'd Mr. Weller, decisively, a perspiration breaking out upon his forehead, "vether that 're old creetur is or is not a widder."

Mr. Pickwick laughed heartily, and so did I, as I replied decisively that "my housekeeper was a spinster."

"There!" cried Sam "now you're satisfied. You hear she's a spinster."

"A wot?" said his father, with deep scorn.

"A spinster," replied Sam.

Mr. Weller looked very hard at his son for a minute or two, and then said,

"Never mind vether she makes jokes or not, that's no matter. Wot I say is, is that ere female a widder, or is she not?"

"Wot do you mean by her making jokes?" demanded Sam, quite aghast at the obscurity of his parent's speech.

"Never you mind, Samivel," returned Mr. Weller, gravely; "puns may be wery good things or they may be wery bad 'uns, and a female may be none the better, or she may be none the vurse for making of 'em; that's got nothing to do vith widders."

"Vy, now," said Sam, looking round, "would anybody believe as a man at his time o' life could be a running his head agin spinsters and punsters being the same thing."

"There an't a straw's difference between 'em," said Mr. Weller. "Your father didn't drive a coach for so many years, not to be ekal to his own langvidge as far as *that* goes, Sammy."

Avoiding the question of etymology, upon which the old gentleman's mind was quite made up, he was several times assured that the housekeeper had never been married. He expressed great satisfaction on hearing this, and apologised for the question, remarking that he had been greatly terrified by a widow not long before, and that his natural timidity was increased in consequence.

"It wos on the rail," said Mr. Weller, with strong emphasis; "I wos a goin' down to Birmingham by the rail, and I wos locked up in a close carriage vith a living widder. Alone we wos; the widder and me wos alone; and I believe it wos only because we *wos* alone and there wos no clergyman in the conwayance, that that 'ere widder didn't marry me afore ve reached the halfway station. Ven I think how she began a screaming as we wos a goin' under them tunnels in the dark—how she kept on a faintin' and kitchin' hold o' me—and how I tried to bust open the door as wos tight-locked, and perwented all escape.—Ah! It wos a awful thing—most awful!"

Mr Weller was so very much overcome by this retrospect that he was unable, until he had wiped his brow several times, to return any reply to the question, whether he approved of railway communication, notwithstanding that it would appear from the answer which he ultimately gave, that he entertained strong opinions on the subject.

"I con-sider," said Mr. Weller, "that the rail is unconstitootional and an inwaser o' priwileges, and I should wery much like to know what that 'ere old Carter as once stood up for our liberties, and wun 'em, too —I should like to know wot he vould say if he wos alive now, to Englishmen being locked up with widders, or with anybody again their wills. Wot a old Carter would have said, a old Coachman may say; and I assert that in that pint o' view alone, the rail is an inwaser. As to the comfort, vere's the comfort o' sittin' in a harm cheer, lookin' at brick walls or heaps o' mud, never comin' to a public house, never seein' a glass o' ale, never goin' through a pike, never meetin' a change o' no kind (horses or othervise), but alvays comin' to a place, ven you come to one at all, the wery picter of the last, vith the same p'leesemen standing about, the same blessed old bell a ringin', the same unfort'nate people standing behind the bars, a waitin' to be let in; and everythin' the same, except the name, vich is wrote up in the same sized letters as the last name and vith the same colours. As to the honour and dignity o' travellin' vere can that be vithout a coachman; and wot's the rail to sich coachmen and guards as is sometimes forced to go by it, but a outrage and a insult? As to the pace, wot sort 'o pace do you think I, Tony Veller, could have kept a coach goin' at, for five hundred thousand pound a mile, paid in adwance, afore the coach was on the road? And as to the ingein—a nasty, wheezin', creaking, gasping puffin', bustin' monster, alvays out o' breath, vith a shiny green and gold back, like a unpleasant beetle in that 'ere gas magnifier;—as to the ingein as is alvays a pourin' out red-hot coals at night, and black smoke in the day, the sensiblest thing it does, in my opinion, is, ven there's somethin' in the vay, and it sets up that 'ere frightful scream, vich seems to say, 'Now, here's two hundred and forty passengers in the wery greatest extremity o' danger, and here's their two hundred and forty screams in vun!'"

By this time I began to fear that my friends would be rendered impatient by my protracted absence. I therefore begged Mr. Pickwick to accompany me up stairs, and left the two Mr. Wellers in the care of the housekeeper; laying strict injunctions upon her to treat them with all possible hospitality.

THE CLOCK.

As we were going up stairs, Mr. Pickwick put on his spectacles, which he had held in his hand hitherto; arranged his neckerchief, smoothed down his waistcoat, and made many other little preparations of that kind which men are accustomed to be mindful of, when they are going among strangers for the first time and are anxious to impress them pleasantly. Seeing that I smiled, he smiled too, and said that if it had occurred to him before he left home, he would certainly have presented himself in pumps and silk stockings.

"I would indeed, my dear sir," he said very seriously; "I would have shown my respect for the society, by laying aside my gaiters."

"You may rest assured," said I, "that they would have regretted your doing so, very much, for they are quite attached to them."

"No, really!" cried Mr. Pickwick with manifest pleasure. "Do you think they care about my gaiters? Do you seriously think that they identify me at all with my gaiters?"

"I am sure they do," I replied.

"Well now," said Mr. Pickwick, "that is one of the most charming and agreeable circumstances that could possibly have occurred to me!"

I should not have written down this short conversation, but that it developed a slight point in Mr. Pickwick's character, with which I was not previously acquainted. He has a secret pride in his legs. The manner in which he spoke, and the accompanying glance he bestowed upon his tights, convince me that Mr. Pickwick regards his legs with much innocent vanity.

"But here are our friends," said I, opening the door and taking his arm in mine; "let them speak for themselves. Gentlemen, I present to you Mr. Pickwick."

Mr. Pickwick and I must have been a good contrast just then. I leaning quietly on my crutch-stick with something of a care-worn, patient air; he having hold of my arm, and bowing in every direction with the most elastic politeness, and an expression of face whose sprightly cheerfulness and good-humour knew no bounds. The difference between us must have been more striking yet as we advanced towards the table, and the amiable gentleman, adapting his jocund step to my poor tread, had his attention divided between treating my infirmities with the utmost consideration, and affecting to be wholly unconscious that I required any.

I made him personally known to each of my friends in turn. First, to the deaf gentleman, whom he regarded with much interest, and accosted with great frankness and cordiality. He had evidently some vague idea, at the moment, that my friend

being deaf must be dumb also; for when the latter opened his lips to express the pleasure it afforded him to know a gentleman of whom he had heard so much, Mr. Pickwick was so extremely disconcerted that I was obliged to step in to his relief.

His meeting with Jack Redburn was quite a treat to see. Mr. Pickwick smiled, and shook hands, and looked at him through his spectacles, and under them, and over them, and nodded his head approvingly, and then nodded to me, as much as to say, "this is just the man; you were quite right," and then turned to Jack and said a few hearty words, and then did and said everything over again with unimpaired vivacity. As to Jack himself, he was quite as much delighted with Mr. Pickwick, as Mr. Pickwick could possibly be with him. Two people never can have met together since the world began, who exchanged a warmer or more enthusiastic greeting.

It was amusing to observe the difference between this encounter, and that which succeeded, between Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Miles. It was clear that the latter gentleman viewed our new member as a kind of rival in the affections of Jack Redburn, and besides this, he had more than once hinted to me, in secret, that although he had no doubt Mr. Pickwick was a very worthy man, still he did consider that some of his exploits were unbecoming a gentleman of his years and gravity. Over and above these grounds of distrust, it is one of his fixed opinions that the law never can by possibility do anything wrong; he therefore looks upon Mr. Pickwick as one who has justly suffered in purse and peace for a breach of his plighted faith to an unprotected female, and holds that he is called upon to regard him with some suspicion on that account. These causes led to a rather cold and formal reception; which Mr. Pickwick acknowledged with the same stateliness and intense politeness as was displayed on the other side. Indeed he assumed an air of such majestic defiance that I was fearful he might break out into some solemn protest or declaration, and therefore inducted him into his chair without a moment's delay.

This piece of generalship was perfectly successful. The instant he took his seat, Mr. Pickwick surveyed us all with a most benevolent aspect, and was taken with a fit of smiling, full five minutes long. His interest in our ceremonies was immense. They are not very numerous or complicated, and a description of them may be comprised in a very few words. As our transactions have already been, and must necessarily continue to be, more or less anticipated by being presented in these pages at different times and under various forms, they do not require a detailed account.

Our first proceeding when we are assembled, is, to shake hands all round, and greet each other with cheerful and pleasant looks. Remembering that we assemble, not only for the promotion of our own happiness, but with the view of adding something to the common stock, an air of languor or indifference in any member of our body would be regarded by the others as a kind of treason. We have never had an offender in this respect; but if we had, there is no doubt that he would be taken to task, pretty severely.

Our salutation over, the venerable piece of antiquity from which we take our name is wound up in silence. This ceremony is always performed by Master Humphrey himself, (in treating of the club, I may be permitted to assume the historical style, and speak of myself in the third person), who mounts upon a chair for the purpose, armed with a large key. While it is in progress, Jack Redburn is required to keep at the further end of the room under the guardianship of Mr. Miles, for he is known to entertain certain aspiring and unhallowed thoughts connected with the clock, and has even gone so far as to state that if he might take the works out for a day or two, he thinks he could improve them. We pardon him his presumption in consideration of his good intentions, and his keeping this respectful distance, which last penalty is insisted on, lest by secretly wounding the object of our regard in some tender part, in the ardour of his zeal for its improvement, he should fill us all with dismay and consternation.

This regulation afforded Mr. Pickwick the highest delight, and seemed, if possible, to exalt Jack in his good opinion.

The next ceremony is the opening of the clock-case (of which Master Humphrey has likewise the key), the taking from it as many papers as will furnish forth our evening's entertainment, and arranging in the recess such new contributions as have been provided since our last meeting. This is always done with peculiar solemnity. The deaf gentleman then fills and lights his pipe, and we once more take our seats round the table before-mentioned, Master Humphrey acting as president—if we can be said to have any president, where all are on the same social footing—and our friend Jack as secretary. Our preliminaries being now concluded, we fall into any train of conversation that happens to suggest itself, or proceed immediately to one of our readings. In the latter case, the paper selected is consigned to Master Humphrey, who flattens it carefully on the table

and makes dog's-ears in the corner of every page, ready for turning over easily; Jack Redburn trims the lamp with a small machine of his own invention which usually puts it out; Mr. Miles looks on with great approval notwithstanding; the deaf gentleman draws in his chair, so that he can follow the words on the paper or on Master Humphrey's lips, as he pleases; and Master Humphrey himself, looking round with mighty gratification and glancing up at his old clock, begins to read aloud.

Mr. Pickwick's face while his tale was being read would have attracted the attention of the dullest man alive. The complacent motion of his head and fore-finger as he gently beat time and corrected the air with imaginary punctuation, the smile that mantled on his features at every jocose passage and the sly look he stole around to observe its effect, the calm manner in which he shut his eyes and listened when there was some little piece of description, the changing expression with which he acted the dialogue to himself, his agony that the deaf gentleman should know what it was all about, and his extraordinary anxiety to correct the reader when he hesitated at a word in the manuscript or substituted a wrong one, were alike worthy of remark. And when at last, after endeavouring to communicate with the deaf gentleman by means of the finger alphabet, with which he constructed such words as are unknown in any civilised or savage language, he took up a slate and wrote in large text, one word in a line, the question, "How—do—you—like—it?"—when he did this, and handing it over the table awaited the reply, with a countenance only brightened and improved by his great excitement, even Mr. Miles relaxed, and could not forbear looking at him for the moment with interest and favour.

"It has occurred to me," said the deaf gentleman, who had watched Mr. Pickwick and everybody else with silent satisfaction, "it has occurred to me," said the deaf gentleman, taking his pipe from his lips, "that now is our time for filling our only empty chair."

As our conversation had naturally turned upon the vacant seat, we lent a willing ear to this remark, and looked at our friend inquiringly.

"I feel sure," said he, "that Mr. Pickwick must be acquainted with somebody who would be an acquisition to us; that he must know the man we want. Pray let us not lose any time, but set this question at rest. Is it so, Mr. Pickwick?"

The gentleman addressed was about to return a verbal reply, but remembering our friend's infirmity he substituted for this kind of answer some fifty nods. Then taking up the slate and printing on it a gigantic "Yes," he handed it across the table, and, rubbing his hands as he looked round upon our faces, protested that he and the deaf gentleman quite understood each other, already.

"The person I have in my mind," said Mr. Pickwick, "and whom I should not have presumed to mention to you until some time hence, but for the opportunity you have given me, is a very strange old man. His name is Bamber."

"Bamber!" said Jack, "I have certainly heard the name before."

"I have no doubt then," returned Mr. Pickwick, "that you remember him in those adventures of mine (the Posthumous Papers of our old club, I mean) although he is only incidentally mentioned; and, if I remember right, appears but once."

"That's it," said Jack. "Let me see. He is the person who has a grave interest in old mouldy chambers and the Inns of court, and who relates some anecdotes having reference to his favourite theme—and an old ghost-story—is that the man?"

"The very same. Now," said Mr. Pickwick, lowering his voice to a mysterious and confidential tone, "he is a very extraordinary and remarkable person: living, and talking, and looking, like some strange spirit, whose delight is to haunt old buildings; and absorbed in that one subject which you have just mentioned, to an extent which is quite wonderful. When I retired into private life, I sought him out, and I do assure you that the more I see of him, the more strongly I am impressed with the strange and dreamy character of his mind."

"Where does he live?" I inquired.

"He lives," said Mr. Pickwick, "in one of those dull, lonely old places with which his thoughts and stories are all connected; quite alone, and often shut up close, for several weeks together. In this dusty solitude, he broods upon the fancies he has so long indulged, and when he goes into the world, or anybody from the world without goes to see him, they are still present to his mind and still his favourite topic. I may say, I believe, that he has brought himself to entertain a regard for me, and an interest in my visits; feelings which I am certain he would extend to Master Humphrey's Clock if he were once tempted to join us. All I wish you to understand, is, that he is a strange secluded visionary, in the world but not of it; and as unlike anybody here as he is unlike anybody elsewhere, that ever I have met, or known."

Mr. Miles received this account of our

proposed companion with rather a wry face, and after murmuring that perhaps he was a little mad, inquired if he were rich.

"I never asked him," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You might know, Sir, for all that," retorted Mr. Miles, sharply.

"Perhaps so, Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, no less sharply than the other, "but I do not. Indeed," he added, relapsing into his usual mildness, "I have no means of judging. He lives poorly, but that would seem to be in keeping with his character. I never heard him allude to his circumstances, and never fell into the society of any man who had the slightest acquaintance with them. I really have told you all I know about him, and it rests with you to say whether you wish to know more, or know quite enough already."

We were unanimously of opinion that we would seek to know more; and as a sort of compromise with Mr. Miles (who, although he said "yes—oh certainly—he should like to know more about the gentleman—he had no right to put himself in opposition to the general wish"—and so forth, shook his head doubtfully and hemmed several times with peculiar gravity), it was arranged that Mr. Pickwick should carry me with him on an evening visit to the subject of our discussion, for which purpose an early appointment between that gentleman and myself was immediately agreed upon; it being understood that I was to act upon my own responsibility, and invite him to join us, or not, as I might think proper. This solemn question determined, we returned to the clock-case, (where we have been forestalled by the reader,) and between its contents, and the conversation they occasioned, the remainder of our time passed very quickly.

When we broke up, Mr. Pickwick took me aside, to tell me that he had spent a most charming and delightful evening. Having made this communication with an air of the strictest secrecy, he took Jack Redburn into another corner to tell him the same, and then retired into another corner with the deaf gentleman and the slate, to repeat the assurance. It was amusing to observe the contest in his mind, whether he should extend his confidence to Mr. Miles, or treat him with dignified reserve. Half-a-dozen times he stepped up behind him with a friendly air, and as often stepped back again without saying a word; at last, when he was close at that gentleman's ear and upon the point of whispering something conciliating and agreeable, Mr. Miles happened suddenly to turn his head, upon which Mr. Pickwick skipped away, and said with some fierceness, "Good night, Sir—I was about to say good night, Sir—nothing more;" and so made a bow and left him.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, when he got down stairs.

"All right, Sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Hold hard, Sir. Right arm fust—now the left—now one strong conwulsion, and the great-coat 's on, Sir."

Mr. Pickwick acted upon these directions, and being further assisted by Sam who pulled at one side of the collar, and the elder Mr. Weller who pulled hard at the other, was speedily enrobed. Mr. Weller senior then produced a full-sized stable lantern, which he had carefully deposited in a remote corner, on his arrival, and inquired whether Mr. Pickwick would have "the lamps alight."

"I think not to-night," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Then if this here lady vill per-mit,' rejoined Mr. Weller, "we 'll leave it here, ready for next journey. This here lantern, mum," said Mr. Weller, handing it to the housekeeper, "vunce belonged to the celebrated Bill Blinder as is now at grass, as all on us vill be in our turns. Bill, mum, wos the hostler as had charge o' them two vell known piebald leaders that run in the Bristol fast coach, and vould never go to nc other tune but a sutherly vind and a cloudy sky, which wos consekvently played incessant, by the guard, wenever they wos on duty. He wos took wery bad one arternoon, arter having been off his feed, and wery shaky on his legs for some veeks; and he says to his mate, 'Matey,' he says, 'I think I'm a-goin' the wrong side o' the post, and that my foot 's wery near the bucket. Don't say I a'nt,' he says, 'for I know I am, and don't let me be interrupted,' he says, 'for I 've saved a little money and I 'm a-goin' into the stable to make my last vill and testymint.' 'I'll take care as nobody interrupts,' says his mate, 'but you on'y hold up your head, and shake your ears a bit, and you 're good for twenty year to come.' Bill Blinder makes him no answer, but he goes avay into the stable, and there he soon artervards lays himself down a'tween the two piebalds and dies,—prevously a-writin' outside the corn-chest, 'This is the last vill and testymint of Villiam Blinder.' They wos nat'rally wery much amazed at this, and arter looking among the litter, and up in the loft, and vere not, they opens the corn-chest, and finds that he 'd been and chalked his vill inside the lid; so the lid wos obligated tc be took off the hinges, and sent up to Doctor Commons to be proved, and under that ere wery instrument this here lantern wos passed to 'Tony Veller, vich circumstarnce. mum, gives it a wally in my eyes, and makes me rek-vest, if you vill be so kind as to take partickler care on it."

The housekeeper graciously promised to keep the object of Mr. Weller's regard in the safest possible custody, and Mr. Pickwick, with a laughing face, took his leave. The body-guard followed, side by side: old Mr. Weller buttoned and wrapped up from his boots to his chin; and Sam with his hands in his pockets and his hat half off his head, remonstrating with his father, as he went, on his extreme loquacity.

I was not a little surprised, on turning to go up stairs, to encounter the barber in the passage at that late hour; for his attendance is usually confined to some half-hour in the morning. But Jack Redburn, who finds out (by instinct, I think) everything that happens in the house, informed me with great glee, that a society in imitation of our own had been that night formed in the kitchen, under the title of "Mr. Weller's Watch," of which the barber was a member; and that he could pledge himself to find means of making me acquainted with the whole of its future proceedings, which I begged him, both on my own account, and that of my readers, by no means to neglect doing.

The Old Curiosity Shop.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

After combating, for nearly a week, the feeling which impelled me to revisit the place I had quitted under the circumstances already detailed, I yielded to it at length; and determining that this time I would present myself by the light of day, bent my steps thither early in the afternoon.

I walked past the house, and took several turns in the street, with that kind of hesitation which is natural to a man who is conscious that the visit he is about to pay is unexpected, and may not be very acceptable. However, as the door of the shop was shut, and it did not appear very likely that I should be recognised by those within, if I continued merely to pass up and down before it, I soon conquered this irresolution, and found myself in the Curiosity Dealer's warehouse.

The old man and another person were together in the back part, and there seemed to have been high words between them, for their voices which were raised to a very loud pitch suddenly stopped on my entering, and the old man advancing hastily towards me, said in a tremulous tone that he was very glad I had come.

"You interrupted us at a critical moment," he said, pointing to the man whom I had found in company with him; "this fellow will murder me one of these days. He would have done so, long ago, if he had dared."

"Bah! You would swear away my life, if you could," returned the other, after bestowing a stare and a frown on me; "we all know that!"

"I almost think I could," cried the old man, turning feebly upon him. "If oaths, or prayers, or words, could rid me of you, they should. I would be quit of you, and would be relieved if you were dead."

"I know it," returned the other. I said so, didn't I? But neither oaths, nor prayers, nor words, *will* kill me; and therefore I live, and mean to live."

"And his mother died!" cried the old

man, passionately clasping his hands and looking upward; "and this is Heaven's justice!"

The other stood lounging with his foot upon a chair, and regarded him with a contemptuous sneer. He was a young man of one-and-twenty, or thereabouts; well made, and certainly handsome, though the expression of his face was far from prepossessing, having in common with his manner and even his dress, a dissipated, insolent air which repelled one.

"Justice or no justice," said the young fellow, "here I am and here I shall stop till such time as I think fit to go, unless you send for assistance to put me out—which you won't do, I know. I tell you again that I want to see my sister."

"*Your* sister!" said the old man bitterly.

"Ah! You can't change the relationship," returned the other. "If you could, you'd have done it long ago. I want to see my sister, that you keep cooped up here, poisoning her mind with your sly secrets and pretending an affection for her that you may work her to death, and add a few scraped shillings every week to the money you can hardly count. I want to see her; and I will."

"Here's a moralist to talk of poisoned minds! Here's a generous spirit to scorn scraped-up shillings!" cried the old man, turning from him to me. "A profligate, sir, who has forfeited every claim not only upon those who have the misfortune to be of his blood, but upon society which knows nothing of him but his misdeeds. A liar too," he added, in a lower voice as he drew closer to me, "who knows how dear she is to me, and seeks to wound me even there, because there is a stranger by."

"Strangers are nothing to me, grandfather," said the young fellow catching at the word, "nor I to them, I hope. The best they can do, is to keep an eye to their business and leave me to mine. There's a friend of mine waiting outside, and as it seems that I may have to wait some time, I'll call him in, with your leave."

Saying this, he stepped to the door, and looking down the street beckoned several times to some unseen person, who, to judge from the air of impatience with which these signals were accompanied, required a great quantity of persuasion to induce him to advance. At length there sauntered up, on the opposite side of the way—with a bad pretence of passing by accident—a figure conspicuous for its dirty smartness, which after a great many frowns and jerks of the head, in resistance of the invitation, ultimately crossed the road and was brought into the shop.

"There. It's Dick Swiveller," said the young fellow, pushing him in. "Sit down, Swiveller."

"But is the old min agreeable?" said Mr. Swiveller in an under tone.

"Sit down," repeated his companion.

Mr. Swiveller complied, and looking about him with a propitiatory smile, observed that last week was a fine week for the ducks, and this week was a fine week for the dust; he also observed that while standing by the post at the street corner, he had observed a pig with a straw in his mouth issuing out of the tobacco-shop, from which appearance he argued that another fine week for the ducks was approaching, and that rain would certainly ensue. He furthermore took occasion to apologize for any negligence that might be perceptible in his dress, on the ground that last night he had had "the sun very strong in his eyes;" by which expression he was understood to convey to his hearers in the most delicate manner possible, the information that he had been extremely drunk.

"But what," said Mr. Swiveller with a sigh, "what is the odds so long as the fire of soul is kindled at the taper of conwiviality, and the wing of friendship never moults a feather! What is the odds so long as the spirit is expanded by means of rosy wine, and the present moment is the least happiest of our existence!"

"You needn't act the chairman here," said his friend, half aside.

"Fred!" cried Mr. Swiveller, tapping his nose, "a word to the wise is sufficient for them—we may be good and happy without riches, Fred. Say not another syllable. I know my cue; smart is the word. Only one little whisper, Fred—*is* the old min friendly?"

"Never you mind," replied his friend.

"Right again, quite right," said Mr. Swiveller, "caution is the word, and caution is the act." With that, he winked as if in preservation of some deep secret, and folding his arms and leaning back in his chair, looked up at the ceiling with profound gravity.

It was perhaps not very unreasonable to suspect from what had already passed, that Mr. Swiveller was not quite recovered from the effects of the powerful sunlight to which he had made allusion; but if no such suspicion had been awakened by his speech, his wiry hair, dull eyes, and sallow face, would still have been strong witnesses against him. His attire was not, as he had himself hinted, remarkable for the nicest arrangement, but was in a state of disorder which strongly induced the idea that he had gone to bed in it. It consisted of a brown body-coat with a great many brass buttons up the front and only one behind,

a bright check neckerchief, a plaid waistcoat, soiled white trousers, and a very limp hat, worn with the wrong side foremost, to hide a hole in the brim. The breast of his coat was ornamented with an outside pocket, from which there peeped forth the cleanest end of a very large and very ill-favoured handkerchief; his dirty wristbands were pulled down as far as possible and ostentatiously folded back over his cuffs; he displayed no gloves, and carried a yellow cane having at the top a bone hand with the semblance of a ring on its little finger and a black ball in its grasp. With all these personal advantages (to which may be added a strong savour of tobacco-smoke, and a prevailing greasiness of appearance) Mr. Swiveller leant back in his chair with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, and occasionally pitching his voice to the needful key, obliged the company with a few bars of an intensely dismal air, and then, in the middle of a note, relapsed into his former silence.

The old man sat himself down in a chair, with folded hands, looked sometimes at his grandson and sometimes at his strange companion, as if he were utterly powerless, and had no resource but to leave them to do as they pleased. The young man reclined against a table at no great distance from his friend, in apparent indifference to everything that had passed; and I—who felt the difficulty of any interference, notwithstanding that the old man had appealed to me, both by words and looks—made the best feint I could of being occupied in examining some of the goods that were disposed for sale, and paying very little attention to the persons before me.

The silence was not of long duration, for Mr. Swiveller, after favouring us with several melodious assurances that his heart was in the highlands, and that he wanted but his Arab steed as a preliminary to the achievement of great feats of valour and loyalty, removed his eyes from the ceiling and subsided into prose again.

"Fred," said Mr. Swiveller, stopping short as if the idea had suddenly occurred to him, and speaking in the same audible whisper as before, "*is* the old min friendly!"

"What does it matter!" returned his friend peevishly.

"No, but *is* he!" said Dick.

"Yes, of course. What do I care whether he is or not."

Emboldened as it seemed by this reply to enter into a more general conversation, Mr. Swiveller plainly laid himself out to captivate our attention.

He began by remarking that soda water, though a good thing in the abstract, was apt to lie cold on the stomach unless qualified with ginger, or a small infusion of brandy, which latter article he held to be preferable in all cases, saving for the one consideration of expense. Nobody ventur-

ing to dispute these positions, he proceeded to observe that the human hair was a great retainer of tobacco-smoke, and that the young gentlemen of Westminster and Eton, after eating vast quantities of apples to conceal any scent of cigars from their anxious friends, were usually detected in consequence of their heads possessing this remarkable property; whence he concluded that if the Royal Society would turn their attention to the circumstance, and endeavour to find in the resources of science a means of preventing such untoward revelations, they might indeed be looked upon as benefactors to mankind. These opinions being equally incontrovertible with those he had already pronounced, he went on to inform us that Jamaica rum, though unquestionably an agreeable spirit of great richness and flavour, had the drawback of remaining constantly present to the taste next day; and nobody being venturous enough to argue this point either, he increased in confidence and became yet more companionable and communicative.

"It's a devil of a thing, gentlemen," said Mr. Swiveller, "when relations fall out and disagree. If the wing of friendship should never moult a feather, the wing of relationship should never be clipped, but be always expanded and serene. Why should a grandson and grandfather peg away at each other with mutual wiolence when all might be bliss and concord? Why not jine hands and forgit it?"

"Hold your tongue," said his friend.

"Sir," replied Mr. Swiveller, "don't you interrupt the chair. Gentlemen, how does the case stand, upon the present occasion? Here is a jolly old grandfather—I say it with the utmost respect—and here is a wild young grandson. The jolly old grandfather says to the wild young grandson, 'I have brought you up and educated you, Fred; I have put you in the way of getting on in life; you have bolted a little out of the course, as young fellows often do; and you shall never have another chance, nor the ghost of half a one.' The wild young grandson makes answer to this and says, 'You're as rich as rich can be; you have been at no uncommon expense on my account; you're saving up piles of money for my little sister that lives with you in a secret, stealthy, hugger-muggering kind of way and with no manner of enjoyment—why can't you stand a trifle for your grown-up relation?' The jolly old grandfather unto this, retorts, not only that he declines to fork out with that cheerful readiness which is always so agreeable and pleasant in a gentleman of his time of life, but that he will blow up, and call names, and make reflections whenever they meet. Then the plain question is, an't it a pity that this state of things should continue, and how much better would it be for the old gentleman to hand over a reasonable amount of tin, and make it all right and comfortable?"

Having delivered this oration with a great many waves and flourishes of the hand, Mr. Swiveller abruptly thrust the head of his cane into his mouth as if to prevent himself from impairing the effect of his speech by adding one other word.

"Why do you hunt and persecute me, God help me?" said the old man turning to his grandson. "Why do you bring your profligate companions here? How often am I to tell you that my life is one of care and self-denial, and that I am poor?"

"How often am I to tell you," returned the other, looking coldly at him, "that I know better?"

"You have chosen your own path," said the old man. "Follow it. Leave Nell and I to toil and work."

"Nell will be a woman soon," returned the other, "and, bred in your faith, she'll forget her brother unless he shows himself sometimes."

"Take care," said the old man with sparkling eyes, "that she does not forget you when you would have her memory keenest. Take care that the day don't come when you walk barefoot in the streets, and she rides by in a gay carriage of her own."

"You mean when she has your money?" retorted the other. "How like a poor man he talks!"

"And yet," said the old man, dropping his voice and speaking like one who thinks aloud, "how poor we are, and what a life it is! The cause is a young child's, guiltless of all harm or wrong, but nothing goes well with it! Hope and patience, hope and patience!"

These words were uttered in too low a tone to reach the ears of the young men. Mr. Swiveller appeared to think that they implied some mental struggle consequent upon the powerful effect of his address, for he poked his friend with his cane and whispered his conviction that he had administered "a clincher," and that he expected a commission on the profits. Discovering his mistake after a while, he appeared to grow rather sleepy and discontented, and had more than once suggested the propriety of an immediate departure, when the door opened, and the child herself appeared.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE child was closely followed by an elderly man of remarkably hard features and forbidding aspect, and so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning; his mouth and chin, bristly with the stubble of a coarse hard beard; and his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile, which, appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connexion with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog. His dress consisted of a large high-crowned hat, a worn dark suit, a pair of capacious shoes, and a dirty white neckerchief sufficiently limp and crumpled to disclose the greater portion of his wiry throat. Such hair as he had, was of a grizzled black, cut short and straight upon his temples, and hanging in a frowzy fringe about his ears. His hands, which were of a rough coarse grain, were very dirty; his finger-nails were crooked, long, and yellow.

There was ample time to note these particulars, for besides that they were sufficiently obvious without very close observation, some moments elapsed before any one broke silence. The child advanced timidly towards her brother and put her hand in his, the dwarf (if we may call him so) glanced keenly at all present, and the curiosity-dealer, who plainly had not expected his uncouth visiter, seemed disconcerted and embarrassed.

"Ah!" said the dwarf, who with his hand stretched out above his eyes had been surveying the young man attentively, "that should be your grandson, neighbour!"

"Say rather that he should not be," replied the old man. "But he is."

"And that?" said the dwarf, pointing to Dick Swiveller.

"Some friend of his, as welcome here as he," said the old man.

"And that!" inquired the dwarf wheeling round and pointing straight at me.

"A gentleman who was so good as to bring Nell home the other night when she lost her way, coming from your house."

The little man turned to the child as if to chide her or express his wonder, but as she was talking to the young man, held his peace, and bent his head to listen.

"Well, Nelly," said the young fellow aloud. "Do they teach you to hate me, eh?"

"No, no. For shame. Oh, no!" cried the child.

"To love me, perhaps?" pursued her brother with a sneer.

"To do neither," she returned. "They never speak to me about you. Indeed they never do."

"I dare be bound for that," he said, darting a bitter look at the grandfather. "I dare be bound for that, Nell. Oh! I believe you there!"

"But I love you dearly, Fred," said the child.

"No doubt!"

"I do indeed, and always will," the child repeated with great emotion, "but, oh! if you would leave off vexing him and making him unhappy, then I could love you more."

"I see!" said the young man, as he stooped carelessly over the child, and, having kissed her, pushed her from him: "There—get you away now, you have said your lesson. You need n't whimper. We part good friends enough, if that's the matter."

He remained silent, following her with his eyes, until she had gained her little room and closed the door; and then turning to the dwarf, said abruptly,

"Harkee, Mr.——"

"Meaning me?" returned the dwarf. "Quilp is my name. You might remember. It's not a long one—Daniel Quilp."

"Harkee, Mr. Quilp, then," pursued the other. "You have some influence with my grandfather there."

"Some," said Mr. Quilp emphatically.

"And are in a few of his mysteries and secrets."

"A few," replied Quilp, with equal dryness.

"Then let me tell him once for all, through you, that I will come into and go out of this place as often as I like, so long as he keeps Nell here; and that if he wants to be quit of me, he must first be quit of her. What have I done to be made a bugbear of, and to be shunned and dreaded as if I brought the plague? He'll tell you that I have no natural affection; and that I care no more for Nell, for her own sake, than I do for him. Let him say so. I care for the whim, then, of coming to and fro and reminding her of my existence. I *will* see her when I please. That's my point. I came here to-day to maintain it, and I'll come here again fifty times with the same

object, and always with the same success. I said I would stop till I had gained it. I have done so, and now my visit's ended. Come, Dick."

"Stop!" cried Mr. Swiveller, as his companion turned towards the door. "Sir!"

"Sir, I am your humble servant," said Mr. Quilp, to whom the monosyllable was addressed.

"Before I leave the gay and festive scene, and halls of dazzling light, sir," said Mr. Swiveller, "I will, with your permission, attempt a slight remark. I came here, sir, this day, under the impression that the old min was friendly."

"Proceed, sir," said Daniel Quilp; for the orator had made a sudden stop.

"Inspired by this idea and the sentiments it awakened, sir, and feeling as a mutual friend that badgering, baiting, and bullying, was not the sort of thing calculated to expand the souls and promote the social harmony of the contending parties, I took upon myself to suggest a course which is *the* course to be adopted on the present occasion. Will you allow me to whisper half a syllable, sir?"

Without waiting for the permission he sought, Mr. Swiveller stepped up to the dwarf, and leaning on his shoulder and stooping down to get at his ear, said in a voice which was perfectly audible to all present.

"The watch-word to the old min is—fork."

"Is what?" demanded Quilp.

"Is fork sir, fork," replied Mr. Swiveller, slapping his pocket. "You are awake, sir?"

The dwarf nodded. Mr. Swiveller drew back and nodded likewise, then drew a little further back and nodded again, and so on. By these means he in time reached the door, where he gave a great cough to attract the dwarf's attention and gain an opportunity of expressing in dumb show, the closest confidence and most inviolable secresy. Having performed the serious pantomime that was necessary for the due conveyance of these ideas, he cast himself upon his friend's track, and vanished.

"Humph!" said the dwarf with a sour look and a shrug of his shoulders, "so much for dear relations. Thank God I acknowledge none! Nor need you either," he added, turning to the old man, "if you were not as weak as a reed, and nearly as senseless."

"What would you have me do?" he retorted in a kind of helpless desperation. "It is easy to talk and sneer. What would you have me do?"

"What would *I* do if I was in your case?" said the dwarf.

"Something violent, no doubt."

"You're right there," returned the little man, highly gratified by the compliment, for such he evidently considered it; and grinning like a devil as he rubbed his dirty hands together. "Ask Mrs. Quilp, pretty Mrs. Quilp, obedient, timid, loving Mrs. Quilp. But that reminds me—I have left her all alone, and she will be anxious and know not a moment's peace till I return. I know she's always in that condition when I'm away, though she doesn't dare to say so, unless I lead her on and tell her she may speak freely and I won't be angry with her. Oh! well-trained Mrs. Quilp!"

The creature appeared quite horrible with his monstrous head and little body, as he rubbed his hands slowly round, and round, and round again—with something fantastic even in his manner of performing this slight action—and, dropping his shaggy brows and cocking his chin in the air, glanced upward with a stealthy look of exultation, that an imp might have copied and appropriated to himself.

"Here," he said, putting his hand into his breast and sidling up to the old man as he spoke; "I brought it myself for fear of accidents, as, being in gold, it was something large and heavy for Nell to carry in her bag. She need be accustomed to such loads betimes though, neighbour, for she will carry weight when you are dead."

"Heaven send she may! I hope so," said the old man with something like a groan.

"Hope so!" echoed the dwarf, approaching close to his ear; "neighbour, I would I knew in what good investment all these supplies are sunk. But you are a deep man, and keep your secret close."

"My secret!" said the other with a haggard look. "Yes, you're right—I—I—keep it close—very close."

He said no more, but taking the money turned away with a slow uncertain step, and pressed his hand upon his head like a weary and dejected man. The dwarf watched him sharply, while he passed into the little sitting-room, and locked it in an iron safe above the chimney-piece; and after musing for a short space, prepared to take his leave, observing that unless he made good haste, Mrs. Quilp would certainly be in fits on his return.

"And so neighbour," he added, "I'll turn my face homewards, leaving my love for Nelly, and hoping she may never lose her way again, though her doing so *has* procured me an honour I didn't expect." With that he bowed and leered at me, and with a keen glance around which seemed to comprehend every object within his

range of vision, however small or trivial, went his way.

I had several times essayed to go myself, but the old man had always opposed it and entreated me to remain. As he renewed his entreaties on our being left alone, and adverted with many thanks to the former occasion of our being together, I willingly yielded to his persuasions, and sat down, pretending to examine some curious miniatures and a few old medals which he placed before me. It needed no great pressing to induce me to stay, for if my curiosity had been excited on the occasion of my first visit, it certainly was not diminished now.

Nell joined us before long, and bringing some needle-work to the table, sat by the old man's side. It was pleasant to observe the fresh flowers in the room, the pet bird with a green bough shading his little cage, the breath of freshness and youth which seemed to rustle through the old dull house and hover round the child. It was curious, but not so pleasant, to turn from the beauty and grace of the girl, to the stooping figure, care-worn face, and jaded aspect of the old man. As he grew weaker and more feeble, what would become of this lonely little creature; poor protector as he was, say that he died — what would her fate be, then?

The old man almost answered my thoughts, as he laid his hand on hers, and spoke aloud.

"I'll be of better cheer, Nell," he said; "there must be good fortune in store for thee—I do not ask it for myself, but thee. Such miseries must fall on thy innocent head without it, that I cannot believe but that, being tempted, it will come at last!"

She looked cheerfully into his face, but made no answer.

"When I think," said he, "of the many years—many in thy short life—that thou hast lived alone with me; of thy monotonous existence, knowing no companions of thy own age nor any childish pleasures; of the solitude in which thou hast grown to be what thou art, and in which thou hast lived apart from nearly all thy kind but one old man; I sometimes fear I have dealt hardly by thee, Nell."

"Grandfather!" cried the child, in unfeigned surprise.

"Not in intention—no no," said he. "I have ever looked forward to the time that should enable thee to mix among the gayest and prettiest, and take thy station with the best. But I still look forward, Nell, I still look forward, and if I should be forced to leave thee, meanwhile how have I fitted thee for struggles with the world? The poor bird yonder is as well qualified to encounter it and be turned adrift upon its mercies—Hark! I hear Kit outside. Go to him, Nell, go to him."

She rose, and hurrying away, stopped, turned back, and put her arms about the old man's neck, then left him and hurried away again—but faster this time, to hide her falling tears.

"A word in your ear, sir," said the old man in a hurried whisper. "I have been rendered uneasy by what you said the other night, and can only plead that I have done all for the best—that it is too late to retract, if I could (though I cannot) — and that I hope to triumph yet. All is for her sake. I have borne great poverty myself, and would spare her the sufferings that poverty carries with it. I would spare her the miseries that brought her mother, my own dear child, to an early grave. I would leave her—not with resources which could be easily spent or squandered away, but with what would place her beyond the reach of want for ever. You mark me, sir? She shall have no pittance, but a fortune—Hush! I can say no more than that, now or at any other time, and she is here again!"

The eagerness with which all this was poured into my ear, the trembling of the hand with which he clasped my arm, the strained and starting eyes he fixed upon me, the wild vehemence and agitation of his manner, filled me with amazement.—All that I had heard and seen, and a great part of what he had said himself, led me to suppose that he was a wealthy man. I could form no comprehension of his character, unless he were one of those miserable wretches who, having made gain the sole end and object of their lives, and having succeeded in amassing great riches, are constantly tortured by the dread of poverty, and beset by fears of loss and ruin.—Many things he had said which I had been at a loss to understand, were quite reconcileable with the idea thus presented to me, and at length I concluded that beyond all doubt he was one of this unhappy race.

The opinion was not the result of hasty consideration, for which indeed there was no opportunity, as the child came back directly, and soon occupied herself in preparations for giving Kit a writing lesson, of which it seemed he had a couple every week, and one regularly on that evening, to the great mirth and enjoyment both of himself and his instructress. To relate how it was a long time before his modesty could be so far prevailed upon as to admit of his sitting down in the parlour, in the presence of an unknown gentleman—how when he did sit down he tucked up his sleeves and squared his elbows and put his face close to the copy-book and squinted horribly at the lines—how from the very

first moment of having the pen in his hand, he began to wallow in blots, and to daub himself with ink up to the very roots of his hair—how if he did by accident form a letter properly, he immediately smeared it out again with his arm in his preparations to make another—how at every fresh mistake, there was a fresh burst of merriment from the child, and a louder and not less hearty laugh from poor Kit himself—and how there was all the way through, notwithstanding, a gentle wish on her part to teach, and an anxious desire on his to learn—to relate all these particulars would no doubt occupy more time and space than they deserve.—It will be sufficient to say that the lesson was given—that evening passed and night came on—that the old man again grew restless and impatient—that he quitted the house secretly at the same hour as before—and that the child was once more left alone within its gloomy walls.

And now that I have carried this history so far in my own character and introduced these personages to the reader, I shall for the convenience of the narrative detach myself from its further course, and leave those who have prominent and necessary parts in it to speak and act for themselves.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

Mr. and Mrs. Quilp resided on Tower Hill; and in her bower on Tower Hill, Mrs. Quilp was left to pine the absence of her lord, when he quitted her on the business which he has been already seen to transact.

Mr. Quilp could scarcely be said to be of any particular trade or calling, though his pursuits were diversified and his occupations numerous. He collected the rents of whole colonies of filthy streets and alleys by the water-side, advanced money to the seamen and petty officers of merchant vessels, had a share in the ventures of divers mates of East Indiamen, smoked his smuggled cigars under the very nose of the Custom-house, and made appointments on Change with men in glazed hats and round jackets pretty well every day. On the Surrey side of the river was a small rat-infested dreary yard called "Quilp's Wharf," in which were a wooden counting-house burrowing all awry in the dust as if it had fallen from the clouds and ploughed into the ground; a few fragments of rusty anchors; several large iron rings; some piles of rotten wood and two or three heaps of old sheet copper, crumpled, cracked, and battered. On Quilp's Wharf, Daniel Quilp was a ship-breaker, yet to judge from these appearances he must either have been a ship-breaker on a very small scale, or have broken his ships up very small indeed.—Neither did the place present any extraordinary aspect of life or activity, as its only human occupant was an amphibious boy in a canvass suit, whose sole change of occupation was from sitting on the head of a pile and throwing stones into the mud when the tide was out, to standing with his hands in his pockets gazing listlessly on the motion and on the bustle of the river at high-water.

The dwarf's lodging on Tower Hill comprised, besides the needful accommodation for himself and Mrs. Quilp, a small sleeping-closet for that lady's mother, who resided with the couple and waged perpetual war with Daniel; of whom, notwithstanding, she stood in no slight dread. Indeed, the ugly creature contrived by some means or other—whether by his ugliness or his ferocity or his natural cunning is no great matter—to impress with a wholesome fear of his anger, most of those with whom he was brought into daily contact and communication. Over nobody had he such complete ascendancy as Mrs. Quilp herself—a pretty little, mild-spoken, blue-eyed woman, who having allied herself in wedlock to the dwarf, in one of those strange infatuations of which examples are by no means scarce, performed a sound practical penance for her folly, every day of her life.

It has been said that Mrs. Quilp was pining in her bower. In her bower she was, but not alone; for besides the old lady her mother of whom mention has recently been made, there were present some half-dozen ladies of the neighbourhood who had happened by a strange accident (and also by a little understanding among themselves) to drop in one after another, just about tea-time. This being a season favourable to conversation, and the room being a cool, shady, lazy kind of place, with some plants at the open window shutting

out the dust, and interposing pleasantly enough between the tea-table within and the old Tower without, it is no wonder that the ladies felt an inclination to talk and linger, especially when there are taken into the account the additional inducements of fresh butter, new bread, shrimps, and water-cresses.

Now, the ladies being together under these circumstances, it was extremely natural that the discourse should turn upon the propensity of mankind to tyrannise over the weaker sex, and the duty that devolved upon the weaker sex to resist that tyranny and assert their rights and dignity. It was natural for four reasons; firstly because Mrs. Quilp being a young woman and notoriously under the dominion of her husband ought to be excited to rebel, secondly because Mrs. Quilp's parent was known to be laudably shrewish in her disposition and inclined to resist male authority, thirdly because each visiter wished to show for herself how superior she was in this respect to the generality of her sex, and fourthly because the company being accustomed to scandalise each other in pairs were deprived of their usual subject of conversation now that they were all assembled in close friendship, and had consequently no better employment than to attack the common enemy.

Moved by these considerations, a stout lady opened the proceedings by inquiring, with an air of great concern and sympathy, how Mr. Quilp was; whereunto Mr. Quilp's wife's mother replied sharply, "Oh! he was well enough—nothing much was ever the matter with him—and ill weeds were sure to thrive." All the ladies then sighed in concert, shook their heads gravely, and looked at Mrs. Quilp as at a martyr.

"Ah!" said the spokeswoman, "I wish you'd give her a little of your advice, Mrs. Jiniwin"—Mrs. Quilp had been a Miss Jiniwin it should be observed—"nobody knows better than you, Ma'am, what us women owe to ourselves."

"Owe indeed, Ma'am!" replied Mrs. Jiniwin. "When my poor husband, her dear father, was alive, if he had ever ventur'd a cross word to *me*, I'd have——" the good old lady did not finish the sentence, but she twisted off the head of a shrimp with a vindictiveness which seemed to imply that the action was in some degree a substitute for words. In this light it was clearly understood by the other party, who immediately replied with great approbation, "You quite enter into my feelings Ma'am, and it's jist what I'd do myself."

"But you have no call to do it," said Mrs. Jiniwin. "Luckily for you, you have no more occasion to do it than I had."

"No woman need have, if she was true to herself," rejoined the stout lady.

"Do you hear that, Betsy?" said Mrs. Jiniwin, in a warning voice. "How often have I said the very same words to you, and almost gone down on my knees when I spoke 'em!"

Poor Mrs. Quilp, who had looked in a state of helplessness from one face of condolence to another, coloured, smiled, and shook her head doubtfully. This was the signal for a general clamour, which beginning in a low murmur gradually swelled into a great noise in which everybody spoke at once, and all said that she being a young woman had no right to set up her opinions against the experiences of those who knew so much better; that it was very wrong of her not to take the advice of people who had nothing at heart but her good; that it was next door to being downright ungrateful to conduct herself in that manner; that if she had no respect for herself she ought to have some for other women, all of whom she compromised by her meekness; and that if she had no respect for other women, the time would come when other women would have no respect for her, and she would be very sorry for that, they could tell her. Having dealt out these admonitions, the ladies fell to a more powerful assault than they had yet made upon the mixed tea, new bread, fresh butter, shrimps, and water-cresses, and said that their vexation was so great to see her going on like that, that they could hardly bring themselves to eat a single morsel.

"It's all very fine to talk," said Mrs. Quilp with much simplicity, "but I know that if I was to die to-morrow, Quilp could marry anybody he pleased—now that he could, I know!"

There was quite a scream of indignation at this idea. Marry whom he pleased! They would like to see him dare to think of marrying any of them; they would like to see the faintest approach to such a thing. One lady (a widow) was quite certain she should stab him if he hinted at it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Quilp, nodding her head, "as I said just now, it's very easy to talk, but I say again that I know—that I'm sure—Quilp has such a way with him when he likes, that the best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead, and she was free, and he chose to make love to her. Come!"

Everybody bridled up at this remark, as much as to say "I know you mean me. Let him try—that's all." And yet for some hidden reason they were all angry with the widow, and each lady whispered in her neighbour's ear that it was very plain the said widow thought herself the

person referred to, and what a puss she was!

"Mother knows," said Mrs. Quilp, "that what I say is quite correct, for she often said so before we were married. Did n't you say so, mother?"

This inquiry involved the respected lady in rather a delicate position, for she certainly had been an active party in making her daughter Mrs. Quilp, and, besides, it was not supporting the family credit to encourage the idea that she had married a man whom nobody else would have. On the other hand, to exaggerate the captivating qualities of her son-in-law would be to weaken the cause of revolt, in which all her energies were deeply engaged. Beset by these opposing considerations, Mrs. Jiniwin admitted the powers of insinuation, but denied the right to govern, and with a timely compliment to the stout lady, brought back the discussion to the point from which it had strayed.

"Oh! It's a sensible and proper thing indeed, what Mrs. George has said!" exclaimed the old lady. "If women are only true to themselves!—But Betsy isn't, and more's the shame and pity."

"Before I'd let a man order me about as Quilp orders her," said Mrs. George; "before I'd consent to stand in awe of a man as she does of him, I'd—I'd kill myself, and write a letter first to say he did it!"

This remark being loudly commended and approved of, another lady (from the Minories) put in her word:

"Mr. Quilp may be a very nice man," said this lady, "and I suppose there's no doubt he is, because Mrs. Quilp says he is, and Mrs. Jiniwin says he is, and they ought to know, or nobody does. But still he is not quite a—what one calls a handsome man, nor quite a young man neither, which might be a little excuse for him if anything could be; whereas his wife is young, and is good-looking, and is a woman—which is the great thing after all."

This last clause being delivered with extraordinary pathos elicited a corresponding murmur from the hearers, stimulated by which the lady went on to remark that if such a husband was cross and unreasonable with such a wife, then—

"If he is!" interposed the mother, putting down her tea-cup and brushing the crumbs out of her lap, preparatory to making a solemn declaration. "If he is! He is the greatest tyrant that ever lived, she daren't call her soul her own, he makes her tremble with a word and even with a look, he frightens her to death, and she hasn't the spirit to give him a word back, no, not a single word."

Notwithstanding that the fact had been notorious beforehand to all the tea-drinkers, and had been discussed and expatiated on at every tea-drinking in the neighbourhood for the last twelve months, this official communication was no sooner made than they all began to talk at once and to vie with each other in vehemence and volubility. Mrs. George remarked that people would talk, that people had often said this to her before, that Mrs. Simmons, then and there present, had told her so twenty times, that she had always said, "No Henrietta Simmons, unless I see it with my own eyes and hear it with my own ears, I never will believe it." Mrs. Simmons corroborated this testimony, and added strong evidence of her own. The lady from the Minories recounted a successful course of treatment under which she had placed her own husband, who, from manifesting one month after marriage unequivocal symptoms of the tiger, had by this means become subdued into a perfect lamb. Another lady recounted her own personal struggle and final triumph, in the course whereof she had found it necessary to call in her mother and two aunts, and to weep incessantly night and day for six weeks. A third, who in the general confusion could secure no other listener, fastened herself upon a young woman, still unmarried, who happened to be amongst them, and conjured her as she valued her own peace of mind and happiness to profit by this solemn occasion, to take example from the weakness of Mrs. Quilp, and from that time forth to direct her whole thoughts to taming and subduing the rebellious spirit of man. The noise was at its height, and half the company had elevated their voices into a perfect shriek, in order to drown the voices of the other half, when Mrs. Jiniwin was seen to change colour and shake her fore-finger stealthily, as if exhorting them to silence. Then, and not until then, Daniel Quilp himself, the cause and occasion of all this clamour, was observed to be in the room, looking on and listening with profound attention.

"Go on ladies, go on," said Daniel. "Mrs. Quilp, pray ask the ladies to stop to supper, and have a couple of lobsters and something light and palatable."

"I—I—didn't ask them to tea, Quilp," stammered his wife. "It's quite an accident."

"So much the better, Mrs. Quilp; these accidental parties are always the pleasantest," said the dwarf, rubbing his hands so hard that he seemed to be engaged in

manufacturing, of the dirt with which they were encrusted, little charges for popguns. "What! Not going ladies, you are not going, surely!"

His fair enemies tossed their heads slightly as they sought their respective bonnets and shawls, but left all verbal contention to Mrs. Jiniwin, who, finding herself in the position of champion, made a faint struggle to sustain the character.

"And why *not* stop to supper, Quilp," said the old lady, "if my daughter had a mind!"

"To be sure," rejoined Daniel. "Why not?"

"There's nothing dishonest or wrong in a supper, I hope?" said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Surely not," returned the dwarf. "Why should there be? Nor anything unwholesome either, unless there's lobster-salad or prawns, which I'm told are not good for digestion."

"And you wouldn't like *your* wife to be attacked with that or anything else that would make her uneasy, would you?" said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Not for a score of worlds," replied the dwarf with a grin. "Not even to have a score of mothers-in-law at the same time—and what a blessing that would be!"

"My daughter's your wife, Mr. Quilp, certainly," said the old lady with a giggle, meant for satirical and to imply that he needed to be reminded of the fact; "your wedded wife."

"So she is certainly. So she is," observed the dwarf.

"And she has a right to do as she likes, I hope, Quilp," said the old lady trembling, partly with anger and partly with a secret fear of her impish son-in-law.

"Hope she has!" he replied. "Oh! don't you know she has? Don't you know she has, Mrs. Jiniwin?"

"I know she ought to have, Quilp, and would have if she was of my way of thinking."

"Why an't you of your mother's way of thinking, my dear?" said the dwarf, turning round to his wife, "why don't you always imitate your mother, my dear? She's the ornament of her sex—your father said so every day of his life, I am sure he did."

"Her father was a blessed creetur, Quilp, and worth twenty thousand of some people," said Mrs. Jiniwin; "twenty hundred million thousand."

"I should like to have known him," replied the dwarf. "I dare say he was a blessed creature then; but I'm sure he is now. It was a happy release. I believe he had suffered a long time!"

The old lady gave a gasp, but nothing

came of it; Quilp resumed, with the same malice in his eye and the same sarcastic politeness on his tongue.

"You look ill, Mrs. Jiniwin; I know you have been exciting yourself too much—talking perhaps, for it is your weakness. Go to bed. Do go to bed."

"I shall go when I please, Quilp, and not before."

"But please to go now. Do please to go now," said the dwarf.

The old woman looked angrily at him, but retreated as he advanced, and falling back before him suffered him to shut the door upon her and bolt her out among the guests, who were by this time crowding down stairs. Being left alone with his wife, who sat trembling in a corner with her eyes fixed upon the ground, the little man planted himself before her, and folding his arms looked steadily at her for some time without speaking.

"Mrs. Quilp," he said at last.

"Yes, Quilp," she replied meekly.

Instead of pursuing the theme he had in his mind, Quilp folded his arms again, and looked at her more sternly than before, while she averted her eyes and kept them on the ground.

"Mrs. Quilp."

"Yes, Quilp."

"If ever you listen to these beldames again, I'll bite you."

With this laconic threat, which he accompanied with a snarl that gave him the appearance of being particularly in earnest, Mr. Quilp bade her clear the tea-board away, and bring the rum. The spirit being set before him in a huge case-bottle, which had originally come out of some ship's locker, he ordered cold water and the box of cigars; and these being supplied, he settled himself in an arm-chair with his large head and face squeezed up against the back, and his little legs planted on the table.

"Now, Mrs. Quilp," he said, "I feel in a smoking humour, and shall probably blaze away all night. But sit where you are, if you please, in case I want you."

His wife returned no other reply than the customary "Yes, Quilp," and the small lord of the creation took his first cigar and mixed his first glass of grog. The sun went down and the stars peeped out, the Tower turned from its own proper colours to grey and from grey to black, the room became perfectly dark and the end of the cigar a deep fiery red, but still Mr. Quilp went on smoking and drinking in the same position, and staring listlessly out of window with the dog-like smile always on his face, save when Mrs. Quilp made some involuntary movement of restlessness or fatigue; and then it expanded into a grin of delight.

MR. WELLER'S WATCH.

It seems that the housekeeper and the two Mr. Wellers, were no sooner left together on the occasion of their first becoming acquainted, than the housekeeper called to her assistance Mr. Slithers the barber, who had been lurking in the kitchen in expectation of her summons; and with many smiles and much sweetness introduced him as one who would assist her in the responsible office of entertaining her distinguished visiters.

"Indeed," said she, "without Mr. Slithers, I should have been placed in quite an awkward situation."

"There is no call for any hock'erdness, mum," said Mr. Weller, with the utmost politeness; "no call wotsumever. A lady," added the old gentleman, looking about him with the air of one who establishes an incontrovertible position, "a lady can't be hock'erd. Natur has otherwise purwided."

The housekeeper inclined her head and smiled yet more sweetly. The barber, who had been fluttering about Mr. Weller and Sam, in a state of great anxiety to improve their acquaintance, rubbed his hands and cried "Hear! hear! Very true sir;" whereupon Sam turned about and steadily regarded him for some seconds in silence.

"I never knew," said Sam, fixing his eyes in a ruminative manner upon the blushing barber, "I never knew but vun o' your trade, but *he* wos worth a dozen and wos indeed dewoted to his callin'!"

"Was he in the easy shaving way sir," inquired Mr. Slithers; "or in the cutting and curling line?"

"Both," replied Sam; "easy shavin' was his natur, and cuttin' and curlin' was his pride and glory. His whole delight wos in his trade. He spent all his money in bears, and run in debt for 'em besides, and there they wos a growling avay down in the front cellar all day long, and ineffectooally gnashing their teeth, vile the grease o' their relations and friends wos being re-tailed in gallipots in the shop above, and the first-floor winder wos ornamented vith their heads; not to speak o' the dreadful aggrawation it must have been to 'em to see a man alvays a walkin' up and down the pavement outside, vith the portrait of a bear in his last agonies, and underneath in large letters, 'Another fine animal wos slaughtered yesterday at Jinkinson's!' Hows'ever, there they wos, and there Jinkinson wos, till he wos took wery ill with some inn'ard disorder, lost the use of his legs, and wos confined to his bed vere he laid a wery long time, but sich wos his pride in his profession even then, that wenever he wos worse than usual the doctor used to go down stairs and say, 'Jinkinson's wery low this mornin'; we must give the bears a stir'; and as sure as ever they stirred 'em up a bit and made 'em

roar, Jinkinson opens his eyes if he wos ever so bad, calls out 'There's the bears!' and rewives agin."

"Astonishing!" cried the barber.

"Not a bit," said Sam, "human natur' neat as imported. Vun day the doctor happenin' to say, 'I shall look in as usual to-morrow mornin', Jinkinson catches hold of his hand and says 'Doctor' he says, 'will you grant me one favor?' 'I will, Jinkinson' says the doctor; 'then doctor' says Jinkinson 'vill you come unshaved, and let me shave you?' 'I will' says the doctor. 'God bless you' says Jinkinson. Next day the doctor came, and arter he'd been shaved all skilful and reg'lar, he says 'Jinkinson' he says 'it's wery plain this does you good. Now' he says 'I've got a coachman as has got a beard that it 'ud warm your heart to work on, and though the footman' he says 'hasn't got much of a beard, still he's a trying it on vith a pair o' viskers to that extent that razors is christian charity. If they take it in turns to mind the carriage wen it's a waitin' below' he says 'wot's to hinder you from operatin' on both of 'em ev'ry day as well as upon me? you've got six children' he says, 'wot's to hinder you from shavin' all their heads and keepin' 'em shaved? you've got two assistants in the shop down stairs, wot's to hinder you from cuttin' and curlin' them as often as you like? Do this' he says 'and you're a man agin.' Jinkinson squeedged the doctor's hand and begun that wery day; he kept his tools upon the bed, and wenever he felt hisself gettin' worse, he turned to at vun o' the children, who wos a runnin' about the house vith heads like clean Dutch cheeses, and shaved him agin. Vun day the lawyer come to make his vill; all the time he wos a takin' it down, Jinkinson was secretly a clippin' avay at his hair vith a large pair of scissors. 'Wot's that 'ere snippin' noise?' says the lawyer every now and then, 'it's like a man havin' his hair cut.' 'It *is* wery like a man havin' his hair cut' says poor Jinkinson, hidin' the scissors and lookin' quite innocent. By the time the lawyer found it out, he was very nearly bald. Jinkinson was kept alive in this vay for a long time, but at last vun day he has in all the children vun arter another, shaves each on 'em wery clean, and gives him vun kiss on the crown of his head; then he has in the two assistants, and arter cuttin' and curlin' of em in the first style of elegance, says he should like to hear the woice o' the greasiest bear, vich rekvest is immedetly complied with; then he says that he feels wery happy in his mind and vishes to be left alone; and then he dies, prevously cuttin' his own hair and makin' one flat curl in the wery middle of his forehead."

This anecdote produced an extraordinary effect, not only upon Mr. Slithers, but upon the housekeeper also, who evinced so much anxiety to please and to be pleased, that Mr. Weller, with a manner betokening some alarm, conveyed a whispered inquiry to his son whether he had gone too fur.

"Wot do you mean by too fur?" demanded Sam.

"In that 'ere little compliment respectin' the want of hock'erdness in ladies, Sammy," replied his father.

"You don't think she's fallen in love with you in consekens o' that, do you!" said Sam.

"More unlikelier things have come to pass, my boy," replied Mr. Weller, in a hoarse whisper; "I'm always afeerd of inadwertent captiwation Sammy. If I know'd how to make myself ugly or unpleasant, I'd do it Samivel, rayther than live in this here state of perpetival terror!"

Mr. Weller had, at that time, no further opportunity of dwelling upon the apprehensions which beset his mind, for the immediate occasion of his fears proceeded to lead the way down stairs, apologising as they went for conducting him into the kitchen, which apartment, however, she was induced to proffer for his accommodation in preference to her own little room, the rather as it afforded greater facilities for smoking, and was immediately adjoining the ale-cellar. The preparations which were already made sufficiently proved that these were not mere words of course, for on the deal table were a sturdy ale-jug and glasses, flanked with clean pipes and a plentiful supply of tobacco, for the old gentleman and his son, while on a dresser hard by, was goodly store of cold meat and other eatables. At sight of these arrangements, Mr. Weller was at first distracted between his love of joviality and his doubts, whether they were not to be considered as so many evidences of captivation having already taken place; but he soon yielded to his natural impulse, and took his seat at the table with a very jolly countenance.

"As to imbibin' any o' this here flagrant veed, mum, in the presence of a lady," said Mr. Weller, taking up a pipe and laying it down again, "it couldn't be. Samivel, total abstinence, if *you* please."

"But I like it of all things," said the housekeeper.

"No," rejoined Mr. Weller, shaking his head. "No."

"Upon my word I do," said the housekeeper. "Mr. Slithers knows I do."

Mr. Weller coughed, and notwithstanding the barber's confirmation of the state

ment, said No again, but more feebly than before. The housekeeper lighted a piece of paper and insisted on applying it to the bowl of the pipe with her own fair hands; Mr. Weller resisted; the housekeeper cried that her fingers would be burnt; Mr. Weller gave way. The pipe was ignited, Mr. Weller drew a long puff of smoke, and detecting himself in the very act of smiling on the housekeeper, put a sudden constraint upon his countenance and looked sternly at the candle, with a determination not to captivate, himself, or encourage thoughts of captivation in others. From this iron frame of mind he was roused by the voice of his son.

"I don't think," said Sam, who was smoking with great composure and enjoyment, "that if the lady wos agreeable, it 'ud be wery far out o' the vay for us four to make up a club of our own, like the governors does up stairs, and let him," Sam pointed with the stem of his pipe towards his parent, "be the president."

The housekeeper affably declared that it was the very thing she had been thinking of. The barber said the same. Mr. Weller said nothing, but he laid down his pipe as if in a fit of inspiration, and performed the following manœuvres.

Unbuttoning the three lower buttons of his waistcoat, and pausing for a moment to enjoy the easy flow of breath consequent upon this process, he laid violent hands upon his watch-chain, and slowly and with extreme difficulty drew from his fob an immense double-cased silver watch, which brought the lining of the pocket with it and was not to be disentangled but by great exertions and an amazing redness of face. Having fairly got it out at last, he detached the outer case, and wound it up with a key of corresponding magnitude, then put the case on again, and having applied the watch to his ear to ascertain that it was still going, gave it some half-dozen hard knocks on the table to improve its performance.

"That," said Mr. Weller, laying it on the table with its face upwards, "is the title and emblem o' this here society. Sammy, reach them two stools this vay for the wacant cheers. Ladies and gen'lmen, Mr. Weller's watch is vound up and now a goin'. Order!"

By way of enforcing this proclamation, Mr. Weller, using the watch after the manner of a president's hammer, and remarking with great pride that nothing hurt it, and that falls and concussions of all kinds materially enhanced the excellence of the works and assisted the regulator, knocked the table a great many times and declared the association formally constituted.

"And don't let 's have no grinnin' at the cheer, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, to his son, "or I shall be committin' you to the cellar, and then p'raps we may get into wot the 'Merrikins call a fix, and the English a qvestion o' privileges."

Having uttered this friendly caution, the president settled himself in his chair with great dignity, and requested that Mr. Samuel would relate an anecdote.

"I 've told one," said Sam.

"Wery good sir; tell another," returned the chair.

"We wos a talking jist now sir," said Sam, turning to Slithers, "about barbers. Pursuing that 'ere fruitful theme sir, I 'll tell you in a wery few words a romantic little story about another barber, as p'raps you may never have heerd."

"Samivel!" said Mr. Weller, again bringing his watch and the table into smart collision, "address your obserwations to the cheer, sir, and not to priwate indiwiduals!"

"And if I might rise to order," said the barber in a soft voice, and looking round him with a conciliatory smile as he leant over the table with the knuckles of his left hand resting upon it, "if I *might* rise to order, I would suggest that 'barbers' is not exactly the kind of language which is agreeable and soothing to our feelings. You, sir, will correct me if I 'm wrong, but I believe there *is* such a word in the dictionary as hair-dressers."

"Well, but suppose he wasn't a *h*air-dresser," suggested Sam.

"Wy then, sir, be parliamentary, and call him vun all the more," returned his father. "In the same vay as ev'ry gen'lman in another place is a *h*onorable, ev'ry barber in this place is a hair-dresser. Ven you read the speeches in the papers, and see as vun gen'lman says of another, 'the *h*onorable member if he vill allow me to call him so,' you vill understand, sir, that that means, 'if he vill allow me to keep up that 'ere pleasant and uniwersal fiction?'"

It is a common remark, confirmed by history and experience, that great men rise with the circumstances in which they are placed. Mr. Weller came out so strong in his capacity of chairman, that Sam was for some time prevented from speaking by a grin of surprise, which held his faculties enchained, and at last subsided in a long whistle of a single note. Nay, the old gentleman appeared even to have astonished himself, and that to no small extent, as was demonstrated by the vast amount of chuckling in which he indulged after the utterance of these lucid remarks.

"Here 's the story," said Sam. "Vunce upon a time there wos a young hair-dresser as opened a wery smart little shop vith four

wax dummies in the winder, two gen'lmen and two ladies—the gen'lmen vith blue dots for their beards, wery large viskers, oudacious heads of hair, uncommon clear eyes, and nostrils of amazin' pinkness—the ladies vith their heads o' one side, their right fore-fingers on their lips, and their forms dewel-oped beautiful, in vich last respect they had the adwantage over the gen'lmen, as wasn't allowed but wery little shoulder and terminated rayther abrupt, in fancy drapery. He had also a many hair-brushes and tooth-brushes bottled up in the winder, neat glass-cases on the counter, a floor-clothed cuttin' room up-stairs, and a weighin' macheen in the shop, right opposite the door; but the great attraction and ornament wos the dummies, which this here young hair-dresser wos constantly a runnin' out in the road to look at, and constantly a runnin' in agin to touch up and polish; in short he wos so proud on 'em that ven Sunday come, he wos always wretched and mis'rable to think they wos behind the shutters, and looked anxiously for Monday on that account. Vun o' these dummies wos a fav'rite vith him beyond the others, and ven any of his acquaintance asked him wy he didn't get married—as the young ladies he know'd, in partickler, often did—he used to say, 'Never! I never vill enter into the bonds of vedlock,' he says, 'until I meet vith a young 'ooman as realizes my idea o' that ere fairest dummy vith the light hair. Then, and not till then,' he says, 'I vill approach the altar!' All the young ladies he know'd as had got dark hair told him this wos wery sinful and that he wos wurshippin' a idle, but them as wos at all near the same shade as the dummy coloured up wery much, and wos observed to think him a wery nice young man."

"Samivel," said Mr. Weller gravely; "a member o' this assosiashun bein' one o' that 'ere tender sex which is now immedetly referred to, I have to rekvest that you vill make no reflexions."

"I ain't a makin' any, am I?" inquired Sam.

"Order, sir!" rejoined Mr. Weller with severe dignity; then sinking the chairman in the father, he added in his usual tone of voice, "Samivel, drive on!"

Sam interchanged a smile with the housekeeper, and proceeded:

"The young hair-dresser hadn't been in the habit o' makin' this awowal above six months, ven he en-countered a young lady as wos the wery picter o' the fairest dummy. 'Now' he says 'it's all up. I am a slave!' The young lady was not only the picter o' the fairest dummy, but she wos wery romantic as the young hair-dresser wos too, and he says 'Oh!' he says 'here's a community o' feelin', here's a flow o' soul!' he says, 'here's a interchange o' sentiment!' The young lady didn't say much o' course, but she expressed herself agreeable, and shortly artervards vent to see him vith a mutual friend. The hair-dresser rushes out to meet her, but d'rectly she sees the dummies, she changes colour and falls a tremblin' wiolently. 'Look up my love' says the hair-dresser, 'behold your imige in my winder, but not correcter than in my art!' 'My imige!' she says. 'Your'n!' replies the hair-dresser. 'But whose imige is *that!*' she says, a pinting at vun o' the gen'lmen. 'No vun's my love' he says 'it is but a idea.' 'A idea!' she cries, 'it is a portrait, I feel it is a portrait, and that 'ere noble face must be in the milingtary!' 'Wot do I hear!' says he a crumplin' his curls. 'Villiam Gibbs' she says quite firm, 'never renoo the subject. I respect you as a friend' she says 'but my affections is set upon that manly brow.' 'This' says the hair-dresser, 'is a reg'lar blight, and in it I perceive the hand of Fate. Farevell!' Vith these vords he rushes into the shop, breaks the dummy's nose vith a blow of his curlin' irons, melts him down at the parlour fire, and never smiles artervards."

"The young lady, Mr. Weller?" said the housekeeper.

"Why ma'am" said Sam, "finding that Fate had a spite agin her and everybody she come into contact vith, she never smiled neither, but read a deal o' poetry and pined avay—by rayther slow degrees, for she an't dead yet. It took a deal o' poetry to kill the hair-dresser, and some people say arter all that it was more the gin and water as caused him to be run over; p'raps it wos a little o' both, and came o' mixing the two."

The barber declared that Mr. Weller had related one of the most interesting stories that had ever come within his knowledge, in which opinion the housekeeper entirely concurred.

"Are you a married man, sir?" inquired Sam.

The barber replied that he had not that honour.

"I s'pose you mean to be?" said Sam.

"Well," replied the barber, rubbing his hands smirkingly, "I don't know, I don't think it's very likely."

"That's a bad sign" said Sam, "if you'd said you meant to be vun o' these days, I should ha' looked upon you as bein' safe. You're in a wery precarious state."

"I am not conscious of any danger, at all events;" returned the barber.

"No more wos I, sir," said the elder Mr

Weller, interposing, "those vere my symptoms exactly. I've been took that vay twice. Keep your vether eye open, my friend, or you're gone."

There was something so very solemn about this admonition, both in its matter and manner, and also in the way in which Mr. Weller still kept his eye fixed upon the unsuspecting victim, that nobody cared to speak for some little time, and might not have cared to do so for some time longer, if the housekeeper had not happened to sigh, which called off the old gentleman's attention, and gave rise to a gallant inquiry whether, "there wos anythin' wery piercin' in that 'ere little heart."

"Dear me, Mr. Weller!" said the housekeeper, laughing.

"No, but is there anythin' as agitates it?" pursued the old gentleman. "Has it always been obderrate, always opposed to the happiness o' human creeturs? Eh? Has it?"

At this critical juncture for her blushes and confusion, the housekeeper discovered that more ale was wanted, and hastily withdrew into the cellar to draw the same, followed by the barber, who insisted on carrying the candle. Having looked after her with a very complacent expression of face, and after him with some disdain, Mr. Weller caused his glance to travel slowly round the kitchen, until at length it rested on his son.

"Sammy" said Mr. Weller, "I mistrust that barber."

"Wot for?" returned Sam, "wot's he got to do with you? You're a nice man, you are, arter pretendin' all kinds o' terror, to go a payin' compliments and talkin' about hearts and piercers."

The imputation of gallantry appeared to afford Mr. Weller the utmost delight, for he replied in a voice choked by suppressed laughter and with the tears in his eyes,

"Wos I a talkin' about hearts and piercers —wos I though, Sammy, eh?"

"Wos you; of course you wos."

"She don't know no better, Sammy, there an't no harm in it—no danger, Sammy; she's only a punster. She seemed pleased though, didn't she? O' course she wos pleased, it's nat'ral she should be, wery nat'ral."

"He's wain of it!" exclaimed Sam, joining in his father's mirth. "He's actually wain!"

"Hush!" replied Mr. Weller, composing his features, "they're a comin' back, the little heart's a comin' back. But mark these wurds o' mine once more, and remember 'em ven your father says he said 'em. Samivel, I mistrust that 'ere deceitful barber."

The Old Curiosity Shop.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

Whether Mr. Quilp took any sleep by snatches of a few winks at a time, or whether he sat with his eyes wide open all night long, certain it is that he kept his cigar alight, and kindled every fresh one from the ashes of that which was nearly consumed, without requiring the assistance of a candle. Nor did the striking of the clocks, hour after hour, appear to inspire him with any sense of drowsiness or any natural desire to go to rest, but rather to increase his wakefulness, which he showed, at every such indication of the progress of the night, by a suppressed cackling in his throat, and a motion of his shoulders, like one who laughs heartily but at the same time slyly and by stealth.

At length the day broke, and poor Mrs. Quilp, shivering with the cold of early morning and harassed by fatigue and want of sleep, was discovered sitting patiently on her chair, raising her eyes at intervals in mute appeal to the compassion and clemency of her lord, and gently reminding him by an occasional cough that she was still unpardoned and that her penance had been of long duration. But her dwarfish spouse still smoked his cigar and drank his rum without heeding her; and it was not until the sun had some time risen, and the activity and noise of city day were rife in the street, that he deigned to recognise her presence by any word or sign. He might not have done so even then, but for certain impatient tappings at the door which seemed to denote that some pretty hard knuckles were actively engaged upon the other side.

"Why dear me!" he said, looking round with a malicious grin, "it's day! open the door, sweet Mrs. Quilp!"

His obedient wife withdrew the bolt, and her lady mother entered.

Now Mrs. Jiniwin bounced into the room with great impetuosity, for supposing her son-in-law to be still a-bed, she had come to relieve her feelings by pronouncing a

strong opinion upon his general conduct and character. Seeing that he was up and dressed, and that the room appeared to have been occupied ever since she quitted it on the previous evening, she stopped short, in some embarrassment.

Nothing escaped the hawk's eye of the ugly little man, who, perfectly understanding what passed in the old lady's mind, turned uglier still in the fulness of his satisfaction, and bade her good morning with a leer of triumph.

"Why Betsy," said the old woman, "you haven't been a — you don't mean to say you 've been a——"

"Sitting up all night?" said Quilp, supplying the conclusion of the sentence. "Yes she has!"

"All night!" cried Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Ay, all night. Is the dear old lady deaf?" said Quilp, with a smile of which a frown was part. "Who says man and wife are bad company? Ha ha! The time has flown."

"You 're a brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Come, come," said Quilp, wilfully misunderstanding her, of course, "you mustn't call her names. She 's married now, you know. And though she *did* beguile the time and keep me from my bed, you must not be so tenderly careful of me as to be out of humour with her. Bless you, for a dear old lady. Here 's your health!"

"I am *much* obliged to you," returned the old woman, testifying by a certain restlessness in her hands, a vehement desire to shake her matronly fist at her son-in-law. "Oh! I 'm very much obliged to you!"

"Grateful soul!" cried the dwarf. "Mrs. Quilp."

"Yes, Quilp," said the timid sufferer.

"Help your mother to get breakfast, Mrs. Quilp. I am going to the wharf this morning — the earlier, the better, — so be quick."

Mrs. Jiniwin made a faint demonstration of rebellion by sitting down in a chair near the door, and folding her arms as if in a resolute determination to do nothing. But a few whispered words from her daughter, and a kind inquiry from her son-in-law whether she felt faint, with a hint that there was abundance of cold water in the next apartment, routed these symptoms effectually, and she applied herself to the prescribed preparations with sullen diligence.

While they were in progress, Mr. Quilp withdrew to the adjoining room, and turning back his coat-collar, proceeded to smear his countenance with a damp towel of very unwholesome appearance, which made his complexion rather more cloudy than it was before. But while he was thus engaged, his caution and inquisitiveness did not forsake him, for with a face as sharp and cunning as ever, he often stopped, even in this short process, and stood listening for any conversation in the next room, of which he might be the theme.

"Ah!" said he, after a short effort of attention, "it was not the towel over my ears, I thought it wasn't. I 'm a little hunchy villain and a monster, am I, Mrs. Jiniwin? Oh!"

The pleasure of this discovery called up the old dog-like smile in full force. When he had done with it, he shook himself in a very dog-like manner, and rejoined the ladies.

Mr. Quelp now walked up to the front of a looking-glass, and was standing there putting on his neckerchief when Mrs. Jiniwin, happening to be behind him, could not resist the inclination she felt to shake her fist at her tyrant son-in-law. It was the gesture of an instant, but as she did so, and accompanied the action with a menacing look, she met his eye in the glass, catching her in the very act. The same glance at the mirror conveyed to her the reflection of a horribly distorted and grotesque face, with the tongue lolling out; and the next instant the dwarf, turning about with a perfectly bland and placid look, inquired in a tone of great affection,

"How are you now, my dear old darling?"

Slight and ridiculous as the incident was, it made him appear such a little fiend, and withal such a keen and knowing one, that the old woman felt too much afraid of him to utter a single word, and suffered herself to be led with extraordinary politeness to the breakfast-table. Here he by no means diminished the impression he had just produced, for he ate hard eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water-cresses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness, drank boiling tea without winking, bit his fork and spoon till they bent again, and in short performed so many horrifying and uncommon acts, that the women were nearly frightened out of their wits, and began to doubt if he were really a human creature. At last, having gone through these proceedings and many others which were equally a part of his system, Mr. Quilp left them, reduced to a very obedient and humble state, and betook himself to the river-side, where he took boat for the wharf on which he had bestowed his name.

It was flood tide when Daniel Quilp sat

himself down in the wherry to cross to the opposite shore. A fleet of barges were coming lazily on, some side-ways, some head first, some stern first; all in a wrong-headed, dogged, obstinate way, bumping up against the larger craft, running under the bows of steamboats, getting into every kind of nook and corner where they had no business, and being crunched on all sides like so many walnut-shells; while each with its pair of long sweeps struggling and splashing in the water looked like some lumbering fish in pain. In some of the vessels at anchor all hands were busily engaged in coiling ropes, spreading out sails to dry, taking in or discharging their cargoes; in others no life was visible but two or three tarry boys, and perhaps a barking dog running to and fro upon the deck or scrambling up to look over the side and bark the louder for the view. Coming slowly on through the forest of masts was a great steam ship, beating the water in short impatient strokes with her heavy paddles as though she wanted room to breathe, and advancing in her huge bulk like a sea monster among the minnows of the Thames. On either hand were long black tiers of colliers; between them vessels slowly working out of harbour with sails glistening in the sun, and creaking noise on board re-echoed from a hundred quarters. The water and all upon it was in active motion, dancing and buoyant and bubbling up; while the old grey Tower and piles of building on the shore, with many a church-spire shooting up between, looked coldly on, and seemed to disdain their chafing, restless neighbour.

Daniel Quilp, who was not much affected by a bright morning save in so far as it spared him the trouble of carrying an umbrella, caused himself to be put ashore hard by the wharf, and proceeded thither through a narrow lane, which, partaking of the amphibious character of its frequenters, had as much water as mud in its composition, and a very liberal supply of both. Arrived at his destination, the first object that presented itself to his view was a pair of very imperfectly shod feet elevated in the air with the soles upwards, which remarkable appearance was referable to the boy, who being of an eccentric spirit, and having a natural taste for tumbling, was now standing on his head and contemplating the aspect of the river under these uncommon circumstances. He was speedily brought on his heels by the sound of his master's voice, and as soon as his head was in its right position, Mr. Quilp, to speak expressively in the absence of a better verb, "punched it" for him.

"Come, you let me alone," said the boy, parrying Quilp's hand with both his elbows alternately. "You'll get something you won't like if you don't, and so I tell you."

"You dog," snarled Quilp, "I'll beat you with an iron rod, I'll scratch you with a rusty nail, I'll pinch your eyes, if you talk to me—I will."

With these threats he clenched his hand again, and dexterously diving in between the elbows and catching the boy's head as it dodged from side to side, gave it three or four good hard knocks. Having now carried his point, and insisted on it he left off.

"You won't do it again," said the boy, nodding his head and drawing back, with the elbows ready in case of the worst;—"now—"

"Stand still, you dog," said Quilp. "I won't do it again, because I've done it as often as I want. Here. Take the key."

"Why don't you hit one of your size?" said the boy, approaching very slowly.

"Where is there one of my size, you dog?" returned Quilp. "Take the key, or I'll brain you with it"—indeed he gave him a smart tap with the handle as he spoke. "Now, open the counting-house."

The boy sulkily complied, muttering at first, but desisting when he looked round and saw that Quilp was following him with a steady look. And here it may be remarked, that between this boy and the dwarf there existed a strange kind of mutual liking. How born or bred, or how nourished upon blows and threats on one side, and retorts and defiances on the other, is not to the purpose. Quilp would certainly suffer nobody to contradict him but the boy, and the boy would assuredly not have submitted to be so knocked about by anybody but Quilp, when he had the power to run away at any time he chose.

"Now," said Quilp, passing into the wooden counting-house, "you mind the wharf. Stand upon your head again, and I'll cut one of your feet off."

The boy made no answer, but directly Quilp had shut himself in, stood on his head before the door, then walked on his hands to the back and stood on his head there, and then to the opposite side and repeated the performance. There were indeed four sides to the counting-house, but he avoided that one where the window was, deeming it probable that Quilp would be looking out of it. This was prudent, for in point of fact the dwarf, knowing his disposition, was lying in wait at a little distance from the sash, armed with a large piece of wood, which, being rough and jagged and studded in many parts with broken nails, might possibly have hurt him.

It was a dirty little box, this counting-house, with nothing in it but an old rickety desk and two stools, a hat-peg, an ancient almanack, an inkstand with no ink, and the stump of one pen, and an eight-day clock which hadn't gone for eighteen years at least, and of which the minute-hand had been twisted off for a tooth-pick. Daniel Quilp pulled his hat over his brows, climbed on to the desk (which had a flat top), and stretching his short length upon it went to sleep with the ease of an old practitioner; intending, no doubt, to compensate himself for the deprivation of last night's rest, by a long and sound nap.

Sound it might have been, but long it was not, for he had not been asleep a quarter of an hour when the boy opened the door and thrust in his head, which was like a bundle of badly-picked oakum. Quilp was a light sleeper and started up directly.

"Here's somebody for you," said the boy.

"Who?"

"I don't know."

"Ask!" said Mr. Quilp, seizing the trifle of wood before mentioned, and throwing it at him with such dexterity that it was well the boy disappeared before it reached the spot on which he had stood. "Ask, you dog."

Not caring to venture within range of such missiles again, the boy discreetly sent in his stead the first cause of the interruption, who now presented herself at the door.

"What, Nelly!" cried Quilp.

"Yes,"—said the child, hesitating whether to enter or retreat, for the dwarf, just roused, with his dishevelled hair hanging all about him, and a yellow handkerchief over his head, was something fearful to behold; "it's only me, sir."

"Come in," said Quilp, without getting off his desk. "Come in. Stay. Just look out into the yard, and see whether there's a boy standing on his head."

"No, sir," replied Nell. "He's on his feet."

"You're sure he is?" said Quilp.—"Well. Now, come in and shut the door. What's your message, Nelly?"

The child handed him a letter. Mr. Quilp, without changing his position, further than to turn over a little more on his side and rest his chin on his hand, proceeded to make himself acquainted with its contents.

The Old Curiosity Shop

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

Little Nell stood timidly by, with her eyes raised to the countenance of Mr. Quilp, as he read the letter, plainly showing by her looks that while she entertained some fear and distrust of the little man, she was much inclined to laugh at his uncouth appearance and grotesque attitude. And yet there was visible on the part of the child a painful anxiety for his reply, and a consciousness of his power to render it disagreeable or distressing, which was strongly at variance with this impulse and restrained it more effectually than she could possibly have done by any efforts of her own.

That Mr. Quilp was himself perplexed, and that in no small degree, by the contents of the letter, was sufficiently obvious. Before he had got through the first two or three lines he began to open his eyes very wide and to frown most horribly, the next two or three caused him to scratch his head in an uncommonly vicious manner, and when he came to the conclusion he gave a long dismal whistle indicative of surprise and dismay. After folding and laying it down beside him, he bit the nails of all his ten fingers with extreme voracity; and taking it up sharply, read it again. The second perusal was to all appearance as unsatisfactory as the first, and plunged him into a profound reverie, from which he awakened to another assault upon his nails and a long stare at the child, who with her eyes turned towards the ground awaited his further pleasure.

"Halloa here!" he said at length, in a voice, and with a suddenness, which made the child start as though a gun had been fired off at her ear. "Nelly!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what 's inside this letter, Nell?"

"No, sir!"

"Are you sure, quite sure, quite certain, upon your soul?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Do you wish you may die if you do know, hey?" said the dwarf.

"Indeed I don't know," returned the child.

"Well!" muttered Quilp, as he marked her earnest look. "I believe you. Humph! Gone already! Gone in four-and-twenty hours! What the devil has he done with it, that 's the mystery!"

This reflection set him scratching his head and biting his nails once more. While

he was thus employed his features gradually relaxed into what was with him a cheerful smile, but which in any other man would have been a ghastly grin of pain, and when the child looked up again she found that he was regarding her with extraordinary favour and complacency.

"You look very pretty to-day, Nelly, charmingly pretty. Are you tired, Nelly?"

"No, sir. I'm in a hurry to get back, for he will be anxious while I am away."

"There's no hurry, little Nell, no hurry at all," said Quilp. "How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?"

"To be what, sir?"

"My number two, Nelly, my second, my Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf.

The child looked frightened, but seemed not to understand him, which Mr. Quilp observing, hastened to explain his meaning more distinctly.

"To be Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead, sweet Nell," said Quilp, wrinkling up his eyes and luring her towards him with his bent forefinger, "to be my wife, my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife. Say that Mrs. Quilp lives five years, or only four, you'll be just the proper age for me. Ha, ha! Be a good girl, Nelly, a very good girl, and see if one of these days you don't come to be Mrs. Quilp of Tower Hill."

So far from being sustained and stimulated by this delightful prospect, the child shrunk from him in great agitation, and trembled violently. Mr. Quilp, either because frightening anybody afforded him a constitutional delight, or because it was pleasant to contemplate the death of Mrs. Quilp number one, and the elevation of Mrs. Quilp number two, to her post and title, or because he was determined for purposes of his own to be agreeable and good-humoured at that particular time, only laughed and feigned to take no heed of her alarm.

"You shall come with me to Tower Hill, and see Mrs. Quilp that is, directly," said the dwarf. "She's very fond of you, Nell, though not so fond as I am. You shall come home with me."

"I must go back indeed," said the child. "He told me to return directly I had the answer."

"But you haven't it, Nelly," retorted the dwarf, "and won't have it, and can't have it, until I have been home; so you see that to do your errand, you must go with me. Reach me yonder hat, my dear, and we'll go directly." With that, Mr. Quilp suffered himself to roll gradually off the desk until his short legs touched the ground, when he got upon them and led the way from the counting-house to the wharf outside, where the first objects that presented themselves were the boy who had stood on his head and another young gentleman of about his own stature, rolling in the mud together, locked in a tight embrace, and cuffing each other with mutual heartiness.

"It's Kit!" cried Nelly, clasping her hands, "poor Kit, who came with me! oh pray stop them, Mr. Quilp!"

"I'll stop 'em," cried Quilp, diving into the little counting-house, and returning with a thick stick, "I'll stop 'em. Now my boys fight away. I'll fight you both, I'll take both of you, both together, both together!"

With which defiances the dwarf flourished his cudgel, and dancing round the combatants and treading upon them and skipping over them, in a kind of frenzy, laid about him, now on one and now on the other, in a most desperate manner, always aiming at their heads and dealing such blows as none but the veriest little savage would have inflicted. This being warmer work than they had calculated upon, speedily cooled the courage of the belligerents, who scrambled to their feet and called for quarter.

"I'll beat you to a pulp, you dogs," said Quilp, vainly endeavouring to get near either of them for a parting blow. "I'll bruise you till you're copper-coloured, I'll break your faces till you haven't a profile between you, I will."

"Come, you drop that stick, or it'll be worse for you," said his boy, dodging round him and watching an opportunity to rush in; "you drop that stick."

"Come a little nearer, and I'll drop it on your skull, you dog," said Quilp, with gleaming eyes; "a little nearer—nearer yet."

But the boy declined the invitation until his master was apparently a little off his guard, when he darted in and seizing the weapon tried to wrest it from his grasp. Quilp, who was as strong as a lion, easily kept his hold until the boy was tugging at it with his utmost power, when he suddenly let it go and sent him reeling backwards, so that he fell violently upon his head. The success of this manœuvre tickled Mr. Quilp beyond description, and he laughed and stamped upon the ground as at a most irresistible jest.

"Never mind," said the boy, nodding his head and rubbing it at the same time, "you see if ever I offer to strike anybody again because they say you're a uglier dwarf than can be seen anywhere for a penny, that's all."

"Do you mean to say, I'm not, you dog?" returned Quilp.

"No!" retorted the boy.

"Then what do you fight on my wharf for, you villain?" said Quilp.

"Because he said so," replied the boy, pointing to Kit, "not because you an't."

"Then why did he say," bawled Kit, "that Miss Nelly was ugly, and that she and my master was obliged to do whatever his master liked! Why did he say that?"

"He said what he did because he's a fool, and you said what you did because you're very wise and clever — almost too clever to live unless you're very careful of yourself, Kit," said Quilp, with great suavity in his manner, but still more of quiet malice about his eyes and mouth. "Here's sixpence for you, Kit. Always speak the truth. At all times, Kit, speak the truth. Lock the counting-house, you dog, and bring me the key."

The other boy, to whom this order was addressed, did as he was told, and was rewarded for his partizanship in behalf of his master, by a dexterous rap on the nose with the key, which brought the water into his eyes. Then Mr. Quilp departed with the child and Kit in a boat, and the boy revenged himself by dancing on his head at intervals on the extreme verge of the wharf, during the whole time they crossed the river.

There was only Mrs. Quilp at home, and she, little expecting the return of her lord, was just composing herself for a refreshing slumber when the sound of his footsteps roused her. She had barely time to seem to be occupied in some needle-work, when he entered, accompanied by the child; having left Kit down stairs.

"Here's Nelly Trent, dear Mrs. Quilp," said her husband. "A glass of wine my dear, and a biscuit, for she has had a long walk. She'll sit with you my soul, while I write a letter."

Mrs. Quilp looked tremblingly in her spouse's face to know what this unusual courtesy might portend, and obedient to the summons she saw in his gesture, followed him into the next room.

"Mind what I say to you," whispered Quilp. "See if you can get out of her anything about her grandfather, or what they do, or how they live, or what he tells her. I've my reasons for knowing, if I can. You women talk more freely to one another than you do to us, and you have a soft, mild way with you that'll win upon her. Do you hear!"

"Yes, Quilp."

"Go, then. What's the matter now?"

"Dear Quilp," faltered his wife, "I love the child — if you *could* do without making me deceive her——"

The dwarf muttering a terrible oath, looked round as if for some weapon with which to inflict condign punishment upon his disobedient wife. The submissive little woman hurriedly entreated him not to be angry, and promised to do as he bade her.

"Do you hear me," whispered Quilp, nipping and pinching her arm; "worm yourself into her secrets; I know you can. I'm listening, recollect. If you're not sharp enough I'll creak the door, and woe betide you if I have to creak it much. Go!"

Mrs. Quilp departed according to order, and her amiable husband, ensconcing himself behind the partly-opened door, and applying his ear close to it, began to listen with a face of great craftiness and attention.

Poor Mrs. Quilp was thinking, however, in what manner to begin or what kind of inquiries she could make; and it was not until the door, creaking in a very urgent manner, warned her to proceed without further consideration, that the sound of her voice was heard.

"How very often you have come backwards and forwards lately to Mr. Quilp, my dear."

"I have said so to grandfather, a hundred times," returned Nell, innocently.

"And what has he said to that?"

"Only sighed, and dropped his head, and seemed so sad and wretched that if you could have seen him I am sure you must have cried; you could not have helped it more than I, I know. How that door creaks!"

"It often does," returned Mrs. Quilp with an uneasy glance towards it. "But your grandfather — he used not to be so wretched?"

"Oh no!" said the child eagerly, "so different! we were once so happy, and he so cheerful and contented! You cannot think what a sad change has fallen on us since."

"I am very, very sorry, to hear you speak like this, my dear!" said Mrs. Quilp. And she spoke the truth.

"Thank you," returned the child, kissing her cheek, "you are always kind to me, and it is a pleasure to talk to you. I can speak to no one else about him, but poor Kit. I am very happy still, I ought to feel happier perhaps than I do, but you cannot think how it grieves me sometimes to see him alter so."

"He'll alter again, Nelly," said Mrs. Quilp, "and be what he was before."

"Oh if God would only let that come about!" said the child with streaming eyes; "but it is a long time now since he

first began to — I thought I saw that door moving!"

"It's the wind," said Mrs. Quilp faintly. "Began to —?"

"To be so thoughtful and dejected, and to forget our old way of spending the time in the long evenings," said the child. "I used to read to him by the fireside, and he sat listening, and when I stopped and we began to talk, he told me about my mother, and how she once looked and spoke just like me when she was a little child. Then he used to take me on his knee, and try to make me understand that she was not lying in her grave, but had flown to a beautiful country beyond the sky, where nothing died or ever grew old — we were very happy once!"

"Nelly, Nelly!"—said the poor woman, "I can't bear to see one as young as you, so sorrowful. Pray don't cry."

"I do so very seldom," said Nell, "but I have kept this to myself a long time, and I am not quite well I think, for the tears come into my eyes and I cannot keep them back. I don't mind telling you my grief, for I know you will not tell it to any one again."

Mrs. Quilp turned away her head and made no answer.

"Then," said the child, "we often walked in the fields and among the green trees, and when we came home at night, we liked it better for being tired, and said what a happy place it was. And if it was dark and rather dull, we used to say, what did it matter to us, for it only made us remember our last walk with greater pleasure, and look forward to our next one. But now we never have these walks, and though it is the same house, it is darker and much more gloomy than it used to be, indeed."

She paused here, but though the door creaked more than once, Mrs. Quilp said nothing.

"Mind you don't suppose," said the child, earnestly, "that grandfather is less kind to me than he was. I think he loves me better every day, and is kinder and more affectionate than he was the day before. You do not know how fond he is of me!"

"I'm sure he loves you dearly," said Mrs. Quilp.

"Indeed, indeed he does!" cried Nell, "as dearly as I love him. But I have not told you the greatest change of all, and this you must never breathe again to any one. He has no sleep or rest, but that which he takes by day, in his easy chair; for every night and nearly all night long he is away from home."

"Nelly!"

"Hush!" said the child, laying her finger on her lip and looking round. "When he comes home in the morning, which is generally just before day, I let him in. Last night he was very late, and it was quite light. I saw that his face was deadly pale, that his eyes were bloodshot, and that his legs trembled as he walked. When I had gone to bed again, I heard him groan. I got up and ran back to him, and heard him say, before he knew that I was there, that he could not bear his life much longer, and if it was not for the child, would wish to die. What shall I do! Oh! what shall I do!"

The fountains of her heart were open; the child, overpowered by the weight of her sorrows and anxieties, by the first confidence she had ever shown, and the sympathy with which her little tale had been received, hid her face in the arms of her helpless friend, and burst into a passion of tears.

In a few moments Mr. Quilp returned, and expressed the utmost surprise to find her in this condition, which he did very naturally and with admirable effect, for that kind of acting had been rendered familiar to him by long practice, and he was quite at home in it.

"She's tired you see, Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf, squinting in a hideous manner to imply that his wife was to follow his lead. "It's a long way from her home to the wharf, and then she was alarmed to see a couple of young scoundrels fighting, and was timorous on the water besides. All this together has been too much for her. Poor Nell!"

Mr. Quilp unintentionally adopted the very best means he could have devised for the recovery of his young visiter, by patting her on the head. Such an application from any other hand might not have produced a remarkable effect, but the child shrunk so quickly from his touch and felt such an instinctive desire to get out of his reach, that she rose directly and declared herself ready to return.

"But you'd better wait, and dine with Mrs. Quilp and me," said the dwarf.

"I have been away too long, Sir, already," returned Nell, drying her eyes.

"Well," said Mr. Quilp, "if you will go, you will, Nelly. Here's the note. It's only to say that I shall see him tomorrow, or maybe next day, and that I couldn't do that little business for him this morning. Good bye, Nelly. Here, you Sir; take care of her, d'ye hear?"

Kit, who appeared at the summons, deigned to make no reply to so needless an injunction, and after staring at Quilp in a threatening manner, as if he doubted whe-

ther he might not have been the cause of Nelly shedding tears, and felt more than half-disposed to revenge the fact upon him on the mere suspicion, turned about and followed his young mistress, who had by this time taken her leave of Mrs. Quilp and departed.

"You're a keen questioner, an't you, Mrs. Quilp?" said the dwarf turning upon her as soon as they were left alone.

"What more could I do?" returned his wife mildly.

"What more could you do!" sneered Quilp, "couldn't you have done something less? couldn't you have done what you had to do without appearing in your favourite part of the crocodile, you minx."

"I am very sorry for the child, Quilp," said his wife. "Surely I've done enough. I've led her on to tell her secret when she supposed we were alone; and you were by, God forgive me."

"You led her on! You did a great deal truly!" said Quilp. "What did I tell you about making me creak the door? It's lucky for you that from what she let fall, I've got the clue I want, for if I hadn't, I'd have visited the failure upon you, I can tell you."

Mrs. Quilp being fully persuaded of this, made no reply. Her husband added with some exultation,

"But you may thank your fortunate stars—the same stars that made you Mrs. Quilp—you may thank them that I'm upon the old gentleman's track, and have got a new light. So let me hear no more about this matter now or at any other time, and don't get anything too nice for dinner, for I shan't be home to it."

So saying, Mr. Quilp put his hat on and took himself off, and Mrs. Quilp, who was afflicted beyond measure by the recollection of the part she had just acted, shut herself up in her chamber, and smothering her head in the bed-clothes bemoaned her fault more bitterly than many less tender hearted persons would have mourned a much greater offence; for in the majority of cases, conscience is an elastic and very flexible article, which will bear a deal of stretching and adapt itself to a great variety of circumstances. Some people by prudent management and leaving it off piece by piece like a flannel waistcoat in warm weather, even contrive, in time, to dispense with it altogether, but there be others who can assume the garment and throw it off at pleasure; and this being the greatest and most convenient improvement, is the one most in vogue.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

"Fred," said Mr. Swiveller, "remember the once popular melody of 'Begone dull care;' fan the sinking flame of hilarity with the wing of friendship; and pass the rosy wine."

Mr. Richard Swiveller's apartments were in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, and in addition to this conveniency of situation had the advantage of being over a tobacconist's shop, so that he was enabled to procure a refreshing sneeze at any time by merely stepping out upon the staircase, and was saved the trouble and expense of maintaining a snuff-box. It was in these apartments that Mr. Swiveller made use of the expressions above recorded for the consolation and encouragement of his desponding friend; and it may not be uninteresting or improper to remark that even these brief observations partook in a double sense of the figurative and poetical character of Mr. Swiveller's mind, as the rosy wine was in fact represented by one glass of cold gin-and-water which was replenished as occasion required from a bottle and jug upon the table, and was passed from one to another in a scarcity of tumblers which, as Mr. Swiveller's was a bachelor's establishment, may be acknowledged without a blush. By a like pleasant fiction his single chamber was always mentioned in the plural number. In its disengaged times, the tobacconist had announced it in his window as "apartments," for a single gentleman, and Mr. Swiveller, following up the hint, never failed to speak of it as his rooms, his lodgings, or his chambers, conveying to his hearers a notion of indefinite space, and leaving their imaginations to wander through long suites of lofty halls, at pleasure.

In this flight of fancy, Mr. Swiveller was assisted by a deceptive piece of furniture, in reality a bedstead, but in semblance a bookcase, which occupied a prominent situation in his chamber, and seemed to defy suspicion and challenge inquiry. There is no doubt that by day Mr. Swiveller firmly believed this secret convenience to be a bookcase and nothing more, that he closed

his eyes to the bed, resolutely denied the existence of the blankets, and spurned the bolster from his thoughts. No word of its real use, no hint of its nightly service, no allusion to its peculiar properties, had ever passed between him and his most intimate friends. Implicit faith in the deception was the first article of his creed. To be the friend of Swiveller, you must reject all circumstantial evidence, all reason, observation, and experience, and repose a blind belief in the bookcase. It was his pet weakness, and he cherished it.

"Fred!" said Mr. Swiveller, finding that his former adjuration had been productive of no effect. "Pass the rosy."

Young Trent with an impatient gesture pushed the glass towards him, and fell again into the moody attitude from which he had been unwillingly roused.

"I'll give you, Fred," said his friend, stirring the mixture, "a little sentiment appropriate to the occasion. Here's May the ——"

"Pshaw!" interposed the other. "You worry me to death with your chattering. You can be merry under any circumstances."

"Why Mr. Trent," returned Dick, "there is a proverb which talks about being merry and wise. There are some people who can be merry and can't be wise, and some who can be wise (or think they can) and can't be merry. I'm one of the first sort. If the proverb's a good 'un, I suppose it's better to keep to half of it than none; at all events I'd rather be merry and not wise, than like you, neither one nor t'other."

"Bah!" muttered his friend, peevishly.

"With all my heart," said Mr. Swiveller. "In the polite circles I believe this sort of thing isn't usually said to a gentleman in his own apartments, but never mind that. Make yourself at home." Adding to this retort an observation to the effect that his friend appeared to be rather "cranky," in point of temper, Richard Swiveller finished the rosy and applied himself to the composition of another glassful, in which, after tasting it with great relish, he proposed a toast to an imaginary company.

"Gentlemen, I'll give you if you please Success to the ancient family of the Swivellers, and good luck to Mr. Richard in particular — Mr. Richard, gentlemen," said Dick, with great emphasis, "who spends all his money on his friends, and is *Bah!'d* for his pains. Hear, hear!"

"Dick!" said the other, returning to his seat after having paced the room, twice or thrice, "will you talk seriously for two minutes, if I show you a way to make your fortune with very little trouble?"

"You've shown me so many," returned Dick; "and nothing has come of any one of 'em but empty pockets—"

"You'll tell a different story of this one, before a very long time is over," said his companion drawing his chair to the table. "You saw my sister Nell?"

"What about her?" returned Dick.

"She has a pretty face, has she not?"

"Why, certainly," replied Dick, "I must say for her, that there's not any very

strong family likeness between her and you."

"Has she a pretty face?" repeated his friend impatiently.

"Yes," said Dick, "she has a pretty face, a very pretty face. What of that?"

"I'll tell you," returned his friend. "It's very plain that the old man and I will remain at daggers-drawn to the end of our lives, and that I have nothing to expect from him. You see that, I suppose?"

"A bat might see that, with the sun shining," said Dick.

"It's equally plain that the money which the old flint—rot him—first taught me to expect that I should share with her at his death, will all be hers, is it not?"

"I should say it was," replied Dick; "unless the way in which I put the case to him, made an impression. It may have done so. It was powerful, Fred. 'Here is a jolly old grandfather'—that was strong, I thought—very friendly and natural. Did it strike you in that way?"

"It didn't strike *him*," returned the other, "so we needn't discuss it. Now look here. Nell is nearly fourteen."

"Fine girl of her age, but small," observed Richard Swiveller parenthetically.

"If I am to go on, be quiet for one minute," returned Trent, fretting at the very slight interest the other appeared to take in the conversation. "Now I'm coming to the point."

"That's right," said Dick.

"The girl has strong affections, and brought up as she has been, may, at her age, be easily influenced and persuaded. If I take her in hand, I will be bound by a very little coaxing and threatening to bend her to my will. Not to beat about the bush (for the advantages of the scheme would take a week to tell) what's to prevent your marrying her?"

Richard Swiveller, who had been looking over the rim of the tumbler while his companion addressed the foregoing remarks to him with great energy and earnestness of manner, no sooner heard these words than he evinced the utmost consternation, and with difficulty ejaculated the monosyllable,

"What!"

"I say, what's to prevent," repeated the other with a steadiness of manner of the effect of which upon his companion he was well assured by long experience, "what's to prevent your marrying her?"

"And she 'nearly fourteen!'" cried Dick.

"I don't mean marrying her now,"—returned the brother, angrily; "say in two years' time, in three, in four. Does the old man look like a long-liver?"

"He don't look like it," said Dick, shaking his head, "but these old people—there's no trusting 'em, Fred. There's an aunt of mine down in Dorsetshire, that was going to die when I was eight years old, and hasn't kept her word yet. They're so aggravating, so unprincipled, so spiteful—unless there's apoplexy in the family, Fred, you can't calculate upon 'em, and even then they deceive you just as often as not."

"Look at the worst side of the question then," said Trent, as steadily as before, and keeping his eyes upon his friend. "Suppose he lives."

"To be sure," said Dick. "There's the rub."

"I say," resumed his friend, "suppose he lives, and I persuaded, or if the word sounds more feasible, forced, Nell to a secret marriage with you. What do you think would come of that?"

"A family and an annual income of nothing, to keep 'em on," said Richard Swiveller after some reflection.

"I tell you," returned the other with an increased earnestness, which, whether it were real or assumed, had the same effect on his companion, "that he lives for her, that his whole energies and thoughts are bound up in her, that he would no more disinherit her for an act of disobedience, than he would take me into his favour again for any act of obedience or virtue that I could possibly be guilty of. He could not do it. You or any other man with eyes in his head may see that, if he chooses."

"It seems improbable, certainly," said Dick, musing.

"It seems improbable because it is improbable," his friend returned. "If you would furnish him with an additional inducement to forgive you, let there be an irreconcileable breach, a most deadly quarrel, between you and me—let there be a pretence of such a thing, I mean, of course—and he'll do so fast enough. As to Nell, constant dropping will wear away a stone; you know you may trust to me as far as she is concerned. So, whether he lives or dies, what does it come to? That you become the sole inheritor of the wealth of this rich old hunks, that you and I spend it together, and that you get into the bargain a beautiful young wife."

"I suppose there's no doubt about his being rich,"—said Dick.

"Doubt! Did you hear what he let fall the other day when we were there? Doubt! What will you doubt next, Dick!"

It would be tedious to pursue the conversation through all its artful windings, or to develope the gradual approaches by which the heart of Richard Swiveller was

gained. It is sufficient to know that vanity, interest, poverty, and every spendthrift consideration urged him to look upon the proposal with favour, and that where all other inducements were wanting, the habitual carelessness of his disposition stepped in and still weighed down the scale on the same side. To these impulses must be added the complete ascendency which his friend had long been accustomed to exercise over him—an ascendency exerted in the beginning sorely at the expense of the unfortunate Dick's purse and prospects, but still maintained without the slightest relaxation, notwithstanding that Dick suffered for all his friend's vices, and was, in nine cases out of ten, looked upon as his designing tempter when he was indeed nothing but his thoughtless light-headed tool.

The motives on the other side were something deeper than any which Richard Swiveller entertained or understood, but these being left to their own developement, require no present elucidation. The negotiation was concluded very pleasantly, and Mr. Swiveller was in the act of stating in flowery terms that he had no insurmountable objection to marrying anybody plentifully endowed with money or moveables, who could be induced to take him, when he was interrupted in his observations by a knock at the door, and the consequent necessity of crying "Come in."

The door was opened, but nothing came in except a soapy arm and a strong gush of tobacco. The gush of tobacco came from the shop down stairs, and the soapy arm proceeded from the body of a servant girl, who being then and there engaged in cleaning the stairs had just drawn it out of a warm pail to take in a letter, which letter she now held in her hand, proclaiming aloud with that quick perception of sirnames peculiar to her class, that it was for Mister Snivelling.

Dick looked rather pale and foolish when he glanced at the direction, and still more so when he came to look at the inside, observing that this was one of the inconveniences of being a lady's man, and that it was very easy to talk as they had been talking, but he had quite forgotten her.

"*Her*. Who?" demanded Trent.

"Sophy Wackles," said Dick.

"Who's she?"

"She's all my fancy painted her, Sir, that's what she is," said Mr. Swiveller taking a long pull at "the rosy," and looking gravely at his friend. "She is lovely, she's divine. You know her."

"I remember," said his companion, carelessly. "What of her?"

"Why, Sir," returned Dick, "between Miss Sophia Wackles, and the humble individual who has now the honour to address you, warm and tender sentiments have been engendered, sentiments of the most honourable and inspiring kind. The Goddess Diana, Sir, that calls aloud for the chase, is not more particular in her behaviour than Sophia Wackles; I can tell you that."

"Am I to believe there's anything real in what you say?" demanded his friend; "you don't mean to say that any love-making has been going on?"

"Love-making, yes. Promising, no," said Dick. "There can be no action for breach, that's one comfort. I've never committed myself in writing, Fred."

"And what's in the letter, pray?"

"A reminder, Fred, for to-night—a small party of twenty, making two hundred light fantastic toes in all, supposing every lady and gentleman to have the proper complement. I must go, if it's only to begin breaking off the affair—I'll do it, don't you be afraid. I should like to know whether she left this herself. If she did, unconscious of any bar to her happiness, it's affecting, Fred."

To solve this question, Mr. Swiveller summoned the handmaid and ascertained that Miss Sophy Wackles had indeed left the letter with her own hands; that she had come accompanied, for decorum's sake no doubt, by a younger Miss Wackles; and that on learning that Mr. Swiveller was at home and being requested to walk up stairs, she was extremely shocked and professed that she would rather die. Mr. Swiveller heard this account with a degree of admiration not altogether consistent with the project in which he had just concurred, but his friend attached very little importance to his behaviour in this respect, probably because he knew that he had influence sufficient to control Richard Swiveller's proceedings in this or any other matter, whenever he deemed it necessary, for the advancement of his own purposes, to exert it.

The Old Curiosity Shop.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

Business disposed of, Mr. Swiveller was inwardly reminded of its being nigh dinner-time, and to the intent that his health might not be endangered by longer abstinence, despatched a message to the nearest eating-house, requiring an immediate supply of boiled beef and greens for two. With this demand, however, the eating-house (having experience of its customer) declined to comply, churlishly sending back for answer that if Mr. Swiveller stood in need of beef, perhaps he would be so obliging as to come there and eat it, bringing with him, as grace before meat, the amount of a certain small account which had been long outstanding. Not at all intimidated by this rebuff, but rather sharpened in wits and appetite, Mr. Swiveller forwarded the same message to another and more distant eating-house, adding to it by way of rider that the gentleman was induced to send so far, not only by the great fame and popularity its beef had acquired, but in consequence of the extreme toughness of the beef retailed at the obdurate cook's shop, which rendered it quite unfit not merely for gentlemanly food but for any human consumption. The good effect of this politic course was demonstrated by the speedy arrival of a small pewter pyramid curiously constructed of platters and covers, whereof the boiled-beef-plates formed the base, and a foaming quart-pot the apex; the structure being resolved into its component parts afforded all things requisite and necessary for a hearty meal, to which Mr. Swiveller and his friend applied themselves with great keenness and enjoyment.

"May the present moment," said Dick, sticking his fork into a large carbuncular potatoe, "be the worst of our lives! I like this plan of sending 'em with the peel on; there's a charm in drawing a potatoe from its native element (if I may so express it) to which the rich and powerful are strangers. Ah! 'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long!' How true that is!—after dinner."

"I hope the eating-house keeper will want but little, and that *he* may not want that little long," returned his companion; "but I suspect you've no means of paying for this!"

"I shall be passing presently, and I'll call," said Dick, winking his eye significantly. "The waiter's quite helpless. The goods are gone, Fred, and there's an end of it."

In point of fact, it would seem that the waiter felt this wholesome truth, for when he returned for the empty plates and dishes and was informed by Mr. Swiveller with dignified carelessness that he would call and settle when he should be passing presently, he displayed some perturbation of spirit, and muttered a few remarks about "payment on delivery," and "no trust," and other unpleasant subjects, but was fain to content himself with inquiring at what hour it was likely the gentleman would call, in order that being personally responsible for the beef, greens, and sundries, he might take care to be in the way at the time. Mr. Swiveller, after mentally calculating his engagements to a nicety, replied that he should look in at from two minutes before six to seven minutes past; and the man disappearing with this feeble consolation, Richard Swiveller took a greasy memorandum-book from his pocket and made an entry therein.

"Is that a reminder, in case you should forget to call?" said Trent with a sneer.

"Not exactly, Fred," replied the imperturbable Richard, continuing to write with a business-like air, "I enter in this little book the names of the streets that I can't go down while the shops are open. This dinner to-day closes Long Acre. I bought a pair of boots in Great Queen Street, last week, and made that no thoroughfare too. There's only one avenue to the Strand left open now, and I shall have to stop up that to-night, with a pair of gloves. The roads are closing so fast in every direction, that in about a month's time, unless my aunt sends me a remittance, I shall have to go three or four miles out of town to get over the way."

"There's no fear of her failing, in the end?" said Trent.

"Why, I hope not," returned Mr. Swiveller, "but the average number of letters it takes to soften her, is six, and this time we have got as far as eight without any effect at all. I'll write another to-morrow morning. I mean to blot it a good deal and shake some water over it out of the pepper-castor, to make it look penitent. 'I'm in such a state of mind that I hardly know what I write'—blot—'if you could see me at this minute shedding tears for my past misconduct'—pepper-castor—'my hand trembles when I think'—blot again—if that don't produce the effect, it's all over."

By this time Mr. Swiveller had finished his entry, and he now replaced his pencil in its little sheath and closed the book, in a perfectly grave and serious frame of mind. His friend discovered that it was time for him to fulfil some other engagement, and Richard Swiveller was accordingly left alone, in company with the rosy wine and his own meditations touching Miss Sophy Wackles.

"It's rather sudden," said Dick, shaking his head with a look of infinite wisdom, and running on (as he was accustomed to do) with scraps of verse as if they were only prose in a hurry; "when the heart of a man is depressed with fears, the mist is dispelled when Miss Wackles appears: she's a very nice girl. She's like the red red rose that's newly sprung in June—there's no denying that—she's also like a melody that's sweetly played in tune. It's really very sudden. Not that there's any need, on account of Fred's little sister, to turn cool directly, but it's better not to go too far. If I begin to cool at all I must begin at once, I see that. There's the chance of an action for breach, that's one reason. There's the chance of Sophy's getting another husband, that's another. There's the chance of—no, there's no chance of that, but it's as well to be on the safe side."

This undeveloped consideration was the possibility, which Richard Swiveller sought to conceal even from himself, of his not being proof against the charms of Miss Wackles, and in some unguarded moment, by linking his fortunes to hers for ever, of putting it out of his own power to further the notable scheme to which he had so readily become a party. For all these reasons, he decided to pick a quarrel with Miss Wackles without delay, and casting about for a pretext determined in favour of groundless jealousy. Having made up his mind on this important point, he circulated the glass (from his right hand to his left, and back again) pretty freely, to enable him to act his part with the greater discretion, and then, after making some slight improvements in his toilet, bent his steps towards the spot hallowed by the fair object of his meditations.

This spot was at Chelsea, for there Miss Sophia Wackles resided with her widowed mother and two sisters, in conjunction with whom she maintained a very small day-school for young ladies of proportionate dimensions; a circumstance which was made known to the neighbourhood by an oval board over the front first-floor window, whereon appeared in circumambient flourishes the words "Ladies' Seminary;" and which was further published and proclaimed at intervals between the hours of half-past nine and ten in the morning, by a straggling and solitary young lady of tender years, standing on the scraper on the tips of her toes, and making futile attempts to reach the knocker with a spelling-book. The several duties of instruction in this establishment were thus discharged. English grammar, composition, geography, and the use of the dumb-bells, by Miss Melissa Wackles; writing, arithmetic, dancing, music, and general fascination, by Miss Sophy Wackles; the art of needle-work, marking, and samplery, by Miss Jane Wackles; corporal punishment, fasting, and other tortures and terrors, by Mrs. Wackles. Miss Melissa Wackles was the eldest daughter, Miss Sophy the next, and Miss Jane the youngest. Miss Melissa might have seen five-and-thirty summers or thereabouts, and verged on the autumnal; Miss Sophy was a fresh, good-humoured, buxom girl of twenty; and Miss Jane numbered scarcely sixteen years. Mrs. Wackles was an excellent but rather venomous old lady of three-score.

To this Ladies' Seminary then, Richard Swiveller hied, with designs obnoxious to the peace of the fair Sophia, who, arrayed in virgin white, embellished by no ornament but one blushing rose, received him on his arrival, in the midst of very elegant not to say brilliant preparations; such as the embellishment of the room with the little flower-pots which always stood on the window-sill outside, save in windy weather when they blew into the area, the choice attire of the day-scholars who were allowed to grace the festival, the unwonted curls of Miss Jane Wackles, who had kept her head during the whole of the preceding day screwed up tight in a yellow play-bill, and the solemn gentility and stately learning of the old lady and her eldest daughter, which struck Mr. Swiveller as being uncommon, but made no further impression upon him.

The truth is—and as there is no accounting for tastes, even a taste so strange as this may be recorded without being looked upon as a wilful and malicious invention—the truth is that neither Mrs. Wackles nor her eldest daughter had at any time greatly favoured the pretensions of Mr. Swiveller, being accustomed to make slight mention of him as "a gay young man," and to sigh and shake their heads ominously whenever his name was mentioned. Mr. Swiveller's conduct in respect to Miss Sophy having been of that vague and dilatory kind which is usually looked upon as betokening no fixed matrimonial intentions, the young lady herself began in course of time to deem it highly desirable, that it should be

brought to an issue one way or other. Hence she had at last consented to play off against Richard Swiveller a stricken market-gardener known to be ready with his offer on the smallest encouragement, and hence—as this occasion had been specially assigned for the purpose—that great anxiety on her part for Richard Swiveller's presence which had occasioned her to leave the note he has been seen to receive. "If he has any expectations at all or any means of keeping a wife well," said Mrs. Wackles to her eldest daughter, "he'll state 'em to us now or never."—"If he really cares about me," thought Miss Sophy, "he must tell me so, to-night."

But all these sayings and doings and thinkings being unknown to Mr. Swiveller, affected him not in the least; he was debating in his mind how he could best turn jealous, and wishing that Sophy were for that occasion only far less pretty than she was, or that she were her own sister, which would have served his turn as well, when the company came, and among them the market-gardener, whose name was Cheggs. But Mr. Cheggs came not alone or unsupported, for he prudently brought along with him his sister, Miss Cheggs, who making straight to Miss Sophy and taking her by both hands, and kissing her upon both cheeks, hoped in an audible whisper that they had not come too early.

"Too early, no!" replied Miss Sophy.

"Oh my dear," rejoined Miss Cheggs, in the same whisper as before, "I've been so tormented, so worried, that it's a mercy we were not here at four o'clock in the afternoon. Alick has been in *such* a state of impatience to come! You'd hardly believe that he was dressed before dinner-time and has been looking at the clock and teasing me ever since. It's all your fault, you naughty thing."

Hereupon Miss Sophy blushed, and Mr. Cheggs (who was bashful before ladies) blushed too, and Miss Sophy's mother and sisters, to prevent Mr. Cheggs from blushing more, lavished civilities and attentions upon him, and left Richard Swiveller to take care of himself. Here was the very thing he wanted, here was good cause, reason and foundation for pretending to be angry; but having this cause, reason and foundation which he had come expressly to seek, not expecting to find, Richard Swiveller was angry in sound earnest, and wondered what the devil Cheggs meant by his impudence.

However, Mr. Swiveller had Miss Sophy's hand for the first quadrille, (country-dances being low, were utterly proscribed,) and so gained an advantage over his rival, who sat despondingly in a corner and contemplated the glorious figure of the young lady as she moved through the mazy dance. Nor was this the only start Mr. Swiveller had of the market-gardener, for determining to show the family what quality of man they trifled with, and influenced perhaps by his late libations, he performed such feats of agility and such spins and twirls as filled the company with astonishment, and in particular caused a very long gentleman who was dancing with a very short scholar, to stand quite transfixed by wonder and admiration. Even Mrs. Wackles forgot for the moment to snub three small young ladies who were inclined to be happy, and could not repress a rising thought that to have such a dancer as that in the family would be a pride indeed.

At this momentous crisis, Miss Cheggs proved herself a vigorous and useful ally, for not confining herself to expressing by scornful smiles a contempt for Mr. Swiveller's accomplishments, she took every opportunity of whispering into Miss Sophy's ear expressions of condolence and sympathy on her being worried by such a ridiculous creature, declaring that she was frightened to death, lest Alick should fall upon, and beat him, in the fullness of his wrath, and entreating Miss Sophy to observe how the eyes of the said Alick gleamed with love and fury; passions, it may be observed, which being too much for his eyes, rushed into his nose, and suffused it with a crimson glow.

"You must dance with Miss Cheggs," said Miss Sophy to Dick Swiveller, after she had danced twice with Mr. Cheggs, and made great show of encouraging his advances. "She's such a nice girl—and her brother's quite delightful."

"Quite delightful, is he?"—muttered Dick. "Quite delighted, too, I should say, from the manner in which he's looking this way."

Here Miss Jane (previously instructed for the purpose) interposed her many curls and whispered her sister to observe how jealous Mr. Cheggs was.

"Jealous! Like his impudence!" said Richard Swiveller.

"His impudence, Mr. Swiveller!" said Jane, tossing her head. "Take care he don't hear you, sir, or you may be sorry for it."

"Oh pray Jane—" said Miss Sophy.

"Nonsense!" replied her sister. "Why shouldn't Mr. Cheggs be jealous if he likes? I like that certainly. Mr. Cheggs has as good a right to be jealous as any body else has; and perhaps he may have a better right soon, if he hasn't already. You know best about that, Sophy."

Though this was a concerted plot be-

tween Miss Sophy and her sister, originating in humane intentions, and having for its object the inducing Mr. Swiveller to declare himself in time; it failed in its effect; for Miss Jane being one of those young ladies who are prematurely shrill and shrewish, gave such undue importance to her part, that Mr. Swiveller retired in dudgeon, resigning his mistress to Mr. Cheggs, and conveying a defiance in his looks which that gentleman indignantly returned.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" said Mr. Cheggs, following him into a corner.—"Have the kindness to smile, sir, in order that we may not be suspected. Did you speak to me, sir?"

Mr. Swiveller looked with a supercilious smile at Mr. Cheggs's toes, then raised his eyes from them to his ancle, from that to nis shin, from that to his knee, and so on, very gradually, keeping up his right leg, until he reached his chin, and travelling straight up the middle of his nose, came at last to his eyes, when he said abruptly,

"No, sir, I didn't!"

"Hem!" said Mr. Cheggs, glancing over his shoulders, "have the goodness to smile again, sir. Perhaps you wished to speak to me, sir."

"No, sir, I didn't do that, either."

"Perhaps you may have nothing to say to me *now*, sir," said Mr. Cheggs, fiercely.

At these words Richard Swiveller withdrew his eyes from Mr. Cheggs's face, and travelling down the middle of his nose and down his waistcoat and down his right leg, reached his toes again, and carefully surveyed them; this done, he crossed over and coming up the other leg, and thence approaching by the waistcoat as before, said when he had got to his eyes, "No, sir, I haven't."

"Oh, indeed, sir!" said Mr. Cheggs. "I'm glad to hear it. You know where I'm to be found I suppose, sir, in case you *should* have any thing to say to me?"

"I can easily inquire, sir, when I want to know."

"There's nothing more we need say, I believe, sir?"

"Nothing more, sir."—With that they closed the tremendous dialogue by frowning mutually. Mr. Cheggs hastened to tender his hand to Miss Sophy, and Mr. Swiveller sat himself down in a corner in a very moody state.

Hard by this corner, Mrs. Wackles and Miss Wackles were seated, looking on at the dance; and unto Mrs. and Miss Wackles, Miss Cheggs occasionally darted when her partner was occupied with his share of the figure, and made some remark or other which was gall and wormwood to Richard Swiveller's soul. Looking into the eyes of Mrs. and Miss Wackles for encouragement, and sitting very upright and uncom-

,ortable on a couple of hard stools, were 'wo of the day-scholars; and when Miss Wackles smiled, and Mrs. Wackles smiled, the two little girls on the stools sought to curry favour by smiling likewise, in gracious acknowledgment of which attention the old lady frowned them down instantly, and said if they dared to be guilty of such impertinence again, they should be sent under convoy to their respective homes.— This threat caused one of the young ladies, she being of a weak and trembling temperament, to shed tears, and for this offence they were both filed off immediately, with a dreadful promptitude that struck terror into the souls of all the pupils.

"I've got such news for you," said Miss Cheggs approaching once more, "Alick has been saying such things to Sophy. Upon my word, you know it's quite serious and in earnest, that's clear."

"What's he been saying, my dear?" demanded Mrs. Wackles.

"All manner of things," replied Miss Cheggs, "you can't think how out he has been speaking!"

Richard Swiveller considered it advisable to hear no more, but taking advantage of a pause in the dancing, and the approach of Mr. Cheggs to pay his court to the old lady, swaggered with an extremely careful assumption of extreme carelessness towards the door, passing on the way Miss Jane Wackles, who in all the glory of her curls was holding a flirtation (as good practice when no better was to be had) with a feeble old gentleman who lodged in the parlour. Near the door sat Miss Sophy, still fluttered and confused by the attentions of Mr. Cheggs, and by her side Richard Swiveller lingered for a moment to exchange a few parting words.

"My boat is on the shore and my bark is on the sea, but before I pass this door I will say farewell to thee," murmured Dick, looking gloomily upon her.

"Are you going?" said Miss Sophy, whose heart sunk within her at the result of her stratagem, but who affected a light indifference notwithstanding.

"Am I going!" echoed Dick bitterly. "Yes, I am. What then?"

"Nothing, except that it's very early," said Miss Sophy, "but you are your own master of course."

"I would that I had been my own mistress too," said Dick, "before I had ever entertained a thought of you. Miss Wackles, I believed you true, and I was blest in so believing, but now I mourn that e'er I knew, a girl so fair yet so deceiving."

Miss Sophy bit her lip and affected to look with great interest after Mr. Cheggs, who was quaffing lemonade in the distance.

"I came here," said Dick, rather oblivious of the purpose with which he had really come, "with my bosom expanded, my heart dilated, and my sentiments of a corresponding description. I go away with feelings that may be conceived but cannot be described, feeling within myself the desolating truth that my best affections have experienced this night a stifler!"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean, Mr. Swiveller," said Miss Sophy with downcast eyes. "I'm very sorry if—"

"Sorry, ma'am!" said Dick; "sorry in the possession of a Cheggs! But I wish you a very good night, concluding with this slight remark, that there is a young lady growing up at this present moment for me, who has not only great personal attractions but great wealth, and who has requested her next of kin to propose for my hand, which, having a regard for some members of her family, I have consented to promise. It's a gratifying circumstance which you'll be glad to hear, that a young and lovely girl is growing into a woman expressly on my account, and is now saving up for me. I thought I'd mention it. I have now merely to apologise for trespassing so long upon your attention. Good night."

"There's one good thing springs out of all this," said Richard Swiveller to himself when he had reached home and was hanging over the candle with the extinguisher in his hand, "which is, that I now go heart and soul, neck and heels, with Fred in all his scheme about little Nelly, and right glad he'll be to find me so strong upon it. He shall know all about that to-morrow, and in the mean time, as it's rather late, I'll try and get a wink or two of the balmy."

"The balmy" came almost as soon as it was courted. In a very few minutes Mr. Swiveller was fast asleep, dreaming that he had married Nelly Trent and come into the property, and that his first act of power was to lay waste the market-garden of Mr Cheggs and turn it into a brick-field

MASTER HUMPHREY FROM HIS CLOCK SIDE IN THE CHIMNEY-CORNER.

Two or three evenings after the institution of Mr. Weller's Watch, I thought I heard as I walked in the garden the voice of Mr. Weller himself at no great distance; and stopping once or twice to listen more attentively, I found that the sounds proceeded from my housekeeper's little sitting-room, which is at the back of the house. I took no further notice of the circumstance at that time, but it formed the subject of a conversation between me and my friend Jack Redburn next morning, when I found that I had not been deceived in my impression. Jack furnished me with the following particulars, and as he appeared to take extraordinary pleasure in relating them, I have begged him in future to jot down any such domestic scenes or occurrences that may please his humour, in order that they may be told in his own way. I must confess that as Mr. Pickwick and he are constantly together, I have been influenced, in making this request, by a secret desire to know something of their proceedings.

On the evening in question, the housekeeper's room was arranged with particular care, and the housekeeper herself was very smartly dressed. The preparations, however, were not confined to mere showy demonstrations, as tea was prepared for three persons, with a small display of preserves and jams and sweet cakes, which heralded some uncommon occasion. Miss Benton (my housekeeper bears that name) was in a state of great expectation too, frequently going to the front door and looking anxiously down the lane, and more than once observing to the servant girl that she expected company and hoped no accident had happened to delay them.

A modest ring at the bell at length allayed her fears, and Miss Benton, hurrying into her own room and shutting herself up in order that she might preserve that appearance of being taken by surprise, which is so essential to the polite reception of visiters, awaited their coming with a smiling countenance.

"Good ev'nin, mum," said the older Mr. Weller, looking in at the door, after a prefatory tap, "I'm afeerd we've come in, rayther arter the time, mum, but the young colt being full o' wice has been a boltin' and shyin' and gettin' his leg over the traces to sich a ex-tent that if he an't wery soon broke in, he'll wex me into a broken heart, and then he'll never be brought out no more, except to learn his letters from the writin' on his grandfather's tombstone."

With these pathetic words, which were addressed to something outside the door about two feet six from the ground, Mr. Weller introduced a very small boy, firmly set upon a couple of very sturdy legs, who looked as if nothing could ever knock him down. Besides having a very round face strongly resembling Mr. Weller's, and a stout little body of exactly his build, this young gentleman, standing with his legs very wide apart, as if the top boots were familiar to them, actually winked upon the housekeeper with his infant eye, in imitation of his grandfather.

"There's a naughty boy, mum," said Mr. Weller, bursting with delight, "there's a immorral Tony. Wos there ever a little chap o' four year and eight months old as vinked his eye at a strange lady, afore?"

As little affected by this observation as by the former appeal to his feelings, Master Weller elevated in the air a small model of a coach-whip which he carried in his hand, and addressing the housekeeper with a shrill "ya—hip!" inquired if she was "going down the road;" at which happy adaptation of a lesson he had been taught from infancy, Mr. Weller could restrain his feelings no longer, but gave him twopence on the spot.

"It's in wain to deny it, mum," said Mr. Weller, "this here is a boy arter his grandfather's own heart, and beats out all the boys as ever wos or will be. Though at the same time, mum," added Mr. Weller, trying to look gravely down upon his favourite, "it was wery wrong on him to want to over all the posts as we come along, and wery cruel on him to force poor grandfather to lift him cross-legged over every vun of 'em. He wouldn't pass vun single blessed post, mum, and at the top o' the lane there's seven-and-forty on 'em all in a row and wery close together."

Here Mr. Weller, whose feelings were in a perpetual conflict between pride in his grandson's achievements, and a sense of his own responsibility and the importance of impressing him with moral truths, burst into a fit of laughter and suddenly checking himself, remarked in a severe tone that little boys as made their grandfathers put 'em over posts, never went to heaven at any price.

By this time, the housekeeper had made tea, and little Tony, placed on a chair be-

side her with his eyes nearly on a level with the top of the table, was provided with various delicacies, which yielded him extreme entertainment. The housekeeper (who seemed rather afraid of the child, notwithstanding her caresses,) patted him on the head, and declared that he was the finest boy she had ever seen.

"Wy, mum," said Mr. Weller, "I don't think you'll see a many sich, and that's the truth. But if my son Samivel would give me my vay, mum, and only dispense with his—might I wenture to say the vurd?"

"What word, Mr. Weller?" said the housekeeper, blushing slightly.

"Petticuts, mum," returned that gentleman, laying his hand upon the garments of his grandson. "If my son, Samivel, mum, vould only dis-pense vith these here, you'd see sich a alteration in his appearance, as the imagination can't depicter."

"But what would you have the child wear instead, Mr. Weller?" inquired the housekeeper.

"I've offered my son Samivel, mum, agen and agen," returned the old gentleman, "to purwide him at my own cost vith a suit o' clothes as 'ud be the makin' on him, and form his mind in infancy for those pursuits as I hope the family of the Vellers vill always dewote themselves to. Tony, my boy, tell the lady wot them clothes are, as grandfather says, father ought to let you vear."

"A little white hat and a little sprig weskut and little knee cords and little top-boots and a little green coat with little bright buttons and a little welwet collar," replied Tony, with great readiness and no stops.

"That's the cos-toom, mum," said Mr. Weller, looking proudly at the housekeeper. "Once make sich a model on him as that, and you'd say he *wos* a angel!"

Perhaps the housekeeper thought that in such a guise young Tony would look more like the angel at Islington than any thing else of that name, or perhaps she was disconcerted to find her previously conceived ideas disturbed, as angels are not commonly represented in top-boots and sprig waistcoats. She coughed doubtfully, but said nothing.

"How many brothers and sisters have you, my dear?" she asked after a short silence.

"One brother and no sister at all," replied Tony. "Sam his name is, and so is my father's. Do you know my father?"

"Oh yes, I know him," said the housekeeper, graciously.

"Is my father fond of you?" pursued Tony.

"I hope so," rejoined the smiling housekeeper.

Tony considered a moment, and then said, "Is my grandfather fond of you?"

This would seem a very easy question to answer, but instead of replying to it, the housekeeper smiled in great confusion, and said that really children did ask such extraordinary questions that it was the most difficult thing in the world to talk to them. Mr. Weller took upon himself to reply that he was very fond of the lady; but the housekeeper entreating that he would not put such things into the child's head, Mr. Weller shook his own while she looked another way, and seemed to be troubled with a misgiving that captivation was in progress. It was perhaps on this account that he changed the subject precipitately.

"It's wery wrong in little boys to make game o' their grandfathers, a'nt it, mum?" asked Mr. Weller, shaking his head waggishly, until Tony looked at him, when he counterfeited the deepest dejection and sorrow.

"Oh very sad!" assented the housekeeper. "But I hope no little boys do that?"

"There is vun young Turk, mum," said Mr. Weller, "as havin' seen his grandfather a little overcome vith drink on the occasion of a friend's birthday, goes a reelin' and staggerin' about the house, and makin' believe that he's the old gen'lm'n."

"Oh quite shocking!" cried the housekeeper.

"Yes mum," said Mr. Weller, "and prevously to so doin', this here young traitor that I'm speakin' of, pinches his little nose to make it red, and then he gives a hiccup and says, 'I'm all right,' he says, 'give us another song!' Ha ha! 'Give us another song,' he says. Ha ha ha!"

In his excessive delight, Mr. Weller was quite unmindful of his moral responsibility, until little Tony kicked up his legs and laughing immoderately cried, "that was me, that was:" whereupon the grandfather by a great effort became extremely solemn.

"No, Tony, not you," said Mr. Weller. "I hope it warn't you, Tony. It must ha' been that 'ere naughty little chap as comes sometimes out o' the empty watch-box round the corner—that same little chap as wos found standing on the table afore the looking-glass, pretending to shave himself vith a oyster-knife."

"He didn't hurt himself, I hope?" observed the housekeeper.

"Not he, mum," said Mr. Weller, proudly, "bless your heart, you might trust that ere boy vith a steam engine a'most, he's such a knowin' young"—but suddenly recollecting himself, and observing that Tony perfectly understood and appreciated the compliment, the old gentleman groaned and observed that "It wos all wery shockin'—wery."

"Oh he's a bad 'un," said Mr. Weller "is that 'ere watch-box boy, makin' such a noise and litter in the back-yard, he does, waterin' wooden horses and feedin' of 'em vith grass, and perpetivally spillin' his little brother out of a veelbarrow, and frightenin' his mother out of her wits, at the wery moment wen she's expectin' to increase his stock of happiness vith another play-feller—oh he's a bad 'un! He's even gone so far as to put on a pair o' paper spectacles as he got his father to make for him, and walk up and down the garden vith his hands behind him in imitation of Mr. Pickwick—but Tony don't do sich things, oh no!"

"Oh no!" echoed Tony.

"He knows better, he does," said Mr. Weller, "he knows that if he wos to come sich games as these, nobody wouldn't love him, and that his grandfather in partickler couldn't abear the sight on him: for vich reasons Tony's always good."

"Always good," echoed Tony; and his grandfather immediately took him on his knee and kissed him, at the same time with many nods and winks slyly pointing at the child's head with his thumb, in order that the housekeeper, otherwise deceived by the admirable manner in which he (Mr. Weller) had sustained his character, might not suppose that any other young gentleman was referred to, and might clearly understand that the boy of the watch-box was but an imaginary creation, and a fetch of Tony himself, invented for his improvement and reformation.

Not confining himself to a mere verbal description of his grandson's abilities, Mr. Weller, when tea was finished, incited him by various gifts of pence and half-pence to smoke imaginary pipes, drink visionary beer from real pots, imitate his grandfather without reserve, and in particular to go through the drunken scene, which threw the old gentleman into ecstasies and filled the housekeeper with wonder. Nor was Mr. Weller's pride satisfied with even this display, for when he took his leave he carried the child like some rare and astonishing curiosity, first to the barber's house and afterwards to the tobacconist's, at each of which places he repeated his performances with the utmost effect to applauding and delighted audiences. It was half-past nine o'clock when Mr. Weller was last seen carrying him home upon his shoulder, and it has been whispered abroad that at that time the infant Tony was rather intoxicated.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

The child, in her confidence with Mrs. Quilp, had but feebly described the sadness and sorrow of her thoughts, or the heaviness of the cloud which overhung her home, and cast dark shadows on its hearth. Besides that it was very difficult to impart to any person not intimately acquainted with the life she led, an adequate sense of its gloom and loneliness, a constant fear of in some way committing or injuring the old man to whom she was so tenderly attached, had restrained her even in the midst of her heart's overflowing, and made her timid of allusion to the main cause of her anxiety and distress.

For, it was not the monotonous days unchequered by variety and uncheered by pleasant companionship, it was not the dark and dreary evenings or the long solitary nights, it was not the absence of every slight and easy pleasure for which young hearts beat high, or the knowing nothing of childhood, but its weakness and its easily wounded spirit, that had wrung such tears from Nell. To see the old man struck down beneath the pressure of some hidden grief, to mark his wavering and unsettled state, to be agitated at times with a dreadful fear that his mind was wandering, and to trace in his words and looks the dawning of despondent madness; to watch and wait and listen for confirmation of these things day after day, and to feel and know that, come what might be, they were alone in the world, with no one to help or advise or care about them—these were causes of depression and anxiety that might have set heavily on an older breast with many influences at work to cheer and gladden it, but how heavily on the mind of a young child to whom they were ever present, and who was constantly surrounded by all that could keep such thoughts in restless action!

And yet, to the old man's vision, Nell was still the same. When he could for a moment disengage his mind from the phan-

tom that haunted and brooded on it always, there was his young companion with the same smile for him, the same earnest words, the same merry laugh, the same love and care that sinking deep into his soul seemed to have been present to him through his whole life. And so he went on, content to read the book of her heart from the page first presented to him, little dreaming of the story that lay hidden in its other leaves, and murmuring within himself that at least the child was happy.

She had been once. She had gone singing through the dim rooms, and moving with gay and lightsome step among their dusty treasures, making them older by her young life, and sterner and more grim by her gay and cheerful presence. But now the chambers were cold and gloomy, and when she left her own little room to while away the tedious hours, and sat in one of them, she was still and motionless as their inanimate occupants, and had no heart to startle the echoes — hoarse from their long silence — with her voice.

In one of these rooms was a window looking into the street, where the child sat, many and many a long evening, and often far into the night, alone and thoughtful. None are so anxious as those who watch and wait, and at these times, mournful fancies came flocking on her mind, in crowds.

She would take her station here at dusk, and watch the people as they passed up and down the street, or appeared at the windows of the opposite houses, wondering whether those rooms were as lonesome as that in which she sat, and whether those people felt it company to see her sitting there, as she did only to see them look out and draw in their heads again. There was a crooked stack of chimneys on one of the roofs, in which by often looking at them she had fancied ugly faces that were frowning over at her and trying to peer into the room, and she felt glad when it grew too dark to make them out, though she was sorry too, when the man came to light the lamps in the street, for it made it late and very dull inside. Then she would draw in her head to look round the room and see that everything was in its place and hadn't moved; and looking out into the street again, would perhaps see a man passing with a coffin on his back, and two or three others silently following him to a house where somebody lay dead, which made her shudder and think of such things until they suggested afresh the old man's altered face and manner, and a new train of fears and speculations. If he were to die—if sudden illness had happened to him, and he were never to come home again, alive — if, one night, he should come home, and kiss and bless her as usual, and after she had gone to bed and had fallen asleep, and was perhaps dreaming pleasantly, and smiling in her sleep, he should kill himself and his blood come creeping, creeping, on the ground to her own bed-room door — These thoughts were too terrible to dwell upon, and again she would have recourse to the street, now trodden by fewer feet and darker and more silent than before. The shops were closing fast, and lights began to shine from the upper windows, as the neighbours went to bed. By degrees these dwindled away and disappeared, or were replaced here and there by a feeble rush-candle which was to burn all night. Still there was one late shop at no great distance which sent forth a ruddy glare upon the pavement even yet, and looked bright and companionable. But in a little time this closed, the light was extinguished, and all was gloomy and quiet, except when some stray footsteps sounded on the pavement, or a neighbour, out later than his wont, knocked lustily at his house-door to rouse the sleeping inmates.

When the night had worn away thus far (and seldom now until it had) the child would close the window, and steal softly down stairs, thinking as she went that if one of those hideous faces below, which often mingled with her dreams, were to meet her by the way, rendering itself visible by some strange light of its own, how terrified she would be. But these fears vanished before a well-trimmed lamp and the familiar aspect of her own room. After praying fervently and with many bursting tears for the old man, and the restoration of his peace of mind and the happiness they had once enjoyed, she would lay her head upon the pillow and sob herself to sleep, often starting up again, before the day-light came, to listen for the bell, and respond to the imaginary summons which had roused her from her slumber.

One night, the third after Nelly's interview with Mrs. Quilp, the old man, who had been weak and ill all day, said he should not leave home. The child's eyes sparkled at the intelligence, but her joy subsided when they reverted to his worn and sickly face.

"Two days," he said, "two whole, clear, days have passed, and there is no reply. What *did* he tell thee, Nell?"

"Exactly what I told you, dear grandfather, indeed."

"True," said the old man, faintly. "Yes. But tell me again, Nell. My head fails me. What was it that he told thee? Nothing more than that he would see me to-morrow or next day? That was in the note."

"Nothing more," said the child. "Shall I go to him again to-morrow, dear grandfather? Very early? I will be there and back, before breakfast."

The old man shook his head, and sighing mournfully, drew her towards him.

"'T would be of no use, my dear, no earthly use. But if he deserts me, Nell, at this moment—if he deserts me now, when I should, with his assistance, be recompensed for all the time and money I have lost, and all the agony of mind I have undergone, which makes me what you see, I am ruined, and—worse, far worse than that—have ruined thee, for whom I ventured all. If we are beggars—!"

"What if we are," said the child boldly. "Let us be beggars, and be happy."

"Beggars—and happy!" said the old man. "Poor child!"

"Dear grandfather," cried the girl, with an energy which shone in her flushed face, trembling voice, and impassioned gesture, "I am not a child in that I think, but even if I am, oh hear me pray that we may beg, or work in open roads or fields, to earn a scanty living, rather than live as we do now."

"Nelly!" said the old man.

"Yes, yes, rather than live as we do now," the child repeated, more earnestly than before. "If you are sorrowful, let me know why and be sorrowful too; if you waste away and are paler and weaker every day, let me be your nurse and try to comfort you. If you are poor, let us be poor together, but let me be with you, do let me be with you, do not let me see such change and not know why, or I shall break my heart and die. Dear grandfather, let us leave this sad place to-morrow, and beg our way from door to door."

The old man covered his face with his hands, and hid it in the pillow of the couch on which he lay.

"Let us be beggars," said the child, passing an arm round his neck, "I have no fear but we shall have enough, I am sure we shall. Let us walk through country places, and sleep in fields and under trees, and never think of money again, or any thing that can make you sad, but rest at nights and have the sun and wind upon our faces in the day, and thank God together. Let us never set foot in dark rooms or melancholy houses any more, but wander up and down wherever we like to go; and when you are tired, you shall stop to rest in the pleasantest place that we can find, and I will go and beg for both."

The child's voice was lost in sobs as she dropped upon the old man's neck; nor did she weep alone.

These were not words for other ears, nor was it a scene for other eyes. And yet other ears and eyes were there and greedily taking in all that passed, and moreover they were the ears and eyes of no less a person than Mr. Daniel Quilp, who, having entered unseen when the child first placed herself at the old man's side, refrained—actuated, no doubt, by motives of the purest delicacy—from interrupting the conversation, and stood looking on with his accustomed grin. Standing, however, being a tiresome attitude to a gentleman already fatigued with walking, and the dwarf being one of that kind of persons who usually make themselves at home, he soon cast his eyes upon a chair into which he skipped with uncommon agility, and perching himself on the back with his feet upon the seat, was thus enabled to look on and listen with greater comfort to himself, besides gratifying at the same time that taste for doing something fantastic and monkey-like, which on all occasions had strong possession of him. Here, then, he sat, one leg cocked carelessly over the other, his chin resting on the palm of his hand, his head turned a little on one side, and his ugly features twisted into a complacent grimace. And in this position the old man, happening in course of time to look that way, at length chanced to see him, to his unbounded astonishment.

The child uttered a suppressed shriek on beholding this agreeable figure; in their first surprise both she and the old man, not knowing what to say, and half doubting its reality, looked shrinkingly at it. Not at all disconcerted by this reception, Daniel Quilp preserved the same attitude, merely nodding twice or thrice with great condescension. At length the old man pronounced his name, and inquired how he came there.

"Through the door," said Quilp, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. "I'm not quite small enough to get through keyholes. I wish I was. I want to have some talk with you, particularly, and in private—with nobody present, neighbour. Good bye, little Nelly."

Nell looked at the old man, who nodded to her to retire, and kissed her cheek.

"Ah!" said the dwarf, smacking his lips, "what a nice kiss that was—just upon the rosy part. What a capital kiss!"

Nell was none the slower in going away, for this remark. Quilp looked after her with an admiring leer, and when she had closed the door, fell to complimenting the old man upon her charms.

"Such a fresh, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour," said Quilp, nursing his short leg, and making his eyes twinkle

very much; "such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell!"

The old man answered by a forced smile, and was plainly struggling with a feeling of the keenest and most exquisite impatience. It was not lost upon Quilp, who delighted in torturing him, or indeed any body else when he could.

"She's so," said Quilp, speaking very slowly, and feigning to be quite absorbed in the subject; "so small, so compact, so beautifully modelled, so fair, with such blue veins and such a transparent skin, and such little feet, and such winning ways — but bless me, you're nervous. Why neighbour, what's the matter? I swear to you," continued the dwarf dismounting from the chair and sitting down in it, with a careful slowness of gesture very different from the rapidity with which he had sprung up unheard, "I swear to you that I had no idea old blood ran so fast or kept so warm. I thought it was sluggish in its course, and cool, quite cool. I am pretty sure it ought to be. Yours must be out of order, neighbour."

"I believe it is," groaned the old man, clasping his head with both hands. "There's burning fever here, and something now and then to which I fear to give a name."

The dwarf said never a word, but watched his companion as he paced restlessly up and down the room, and presently returned to his seat. Here he remained with his head bowed upon his breast for some time, and then suddenly raising it, said,

"Once, and once for all, have you brought me any money?"

"No!" returned Quilp.

"Then," said the old man, clenching his hands desperately, and looking upward, "the child and I are lost!"

"Neighbour," said Quilp glancing sternly at him, and beating his hand twice or thrice upon the table to attract his wandering attention, "let me be plain with you, and play a fairer game than when you held all the cards, and I saw but the backs and nothing more. You have no secret from me now."

The old man looked up, trembling.

"You are surprised," said Quilp. "Well, perhaps that's natural. You have no secret from me now, I say; no, not one. For now I know that all those sums of money, that all those loans, advances, and supplies that you have had from me, have found their way to — shall I say the word?"

"Ay!" replied the old man, "say it, if you will."

"To the gaming-table," rejoined Quilp, "your nightly haunt. This was the precious scheme to make your fortune, was it; this was the secret certain source of wealth in which I was to have sunk my money (if I had been the fool you took me for); this was your inexhaustible mine of gold, your El Dorado, eh?"

"Yes," cried the old man, turning upon him with gleaming eyes, "it was. It is. It will be till I die."

"That I should have been blinded," said Quilp, looking contemptuously at him, "by a mere shallow gambler!"

"I am no gambler," cried the old man fiercely. "I call Heaven to witness that I never played for gain of mine, or love of play; that at every piece I staked, I whispered to myself that orphan's name and called on Heaven to bless the venture, which it never did. Whom did it prosper? Who were those with whom I played? Men who lived by plunder, profligacy, and riot, squandering their gold in doing ill and propagating vice and evil. My winnings would have been from them, my winnings would have been bestowed to the last farthing on a young sinless child whose life they would have sweetened and made happy. What would they have contracted? The means of corruption, wretchedness, and misery. Who would not have hoped in such a cause—tell me that; now who would not have hoped as I did?"

"When did you first begin this mad career?" asked Quilp, his taunting inclination subdued for a moment by the old man's grief and wildness.

"When did I first begin?" he rejoined, passing his hand across his brow. "When *was* it, that I first began? When should it be but when I began to think how little I had saved, how long a time it took to save at all, how short a time I might have at my age to live, and how she would be left to the rough mercies of the world, with barely enough to keep her from the sorrows that wait on poverty; then it was that I began to think about it."

"After you first came to me to get your precious grandson packed off to sea?" said Quilp.

"Shortly after that," replied the old man. "I thought of it a long time, and had it in my sleep for months. Then I began. I found no pleasure in it, I expected none. What has it ever brought to me but anxious days and sleepless nights, but loss of health and peace of mind, and gain of feebleness and sorrow!"

"You lost what money you had laid by first, and then came to me. While I thought you were making your fortune (as you said you were) you were making yourself a beggar, eh? Dear me! And so it comes to pass that I hold every security you could scrape together, and a bill of sale upon the — upon the stock and pro-

perty," said Quilp standing up and looking about him, as if to assure himself that none of it had been taken away. "But did you never win?"

"Never!" groaned the old man. "Never won back my loss!"

"I thought," sneered the dwarf, "that if a man played long enough he was sure to win at last, or at the worst not come off a loser."

"And so he is," cried the old man, suddenly rousing himself from his state of despondency, and lashed into the most violent excitement, "so he is; I have felt that from the first, I have always known it, I've seen it, I never felt it half so strongly as I feel it now. Quilp, I have dreamed three nights of winning the same large sum, I never could dream that dream before, though I have often tried. Do not desert me now I have this chance. I have no resource but you, give me some help, let me try this one last hope."

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"See, Quilp, good, tender-hearted Quilp," said the old man, drawing some scraps of paper from his pocket with a trembling hand, and clasping the dwarf's arm, "only see here. Look at these figures, the result of long calculation, and painful and hard experience. I *must* win, I only want a little help once more, a few pounds, but two score pounds, dear Quilp."

"The last advance was seventy," said the dwarf; "and it went in one night."

"I know it did," answered the old man, "but that was the very worst fortune of all, and the time had not come then. Quilp, consider, consider," the old man cried, trembling so much the while that the papers in his hand fluttered as if they were shaken by the wind, "that orphan child. If I were alone, I could die with gladness—perhaps even anticipate that doom which is dealt out so unequally, coming as it does on the proud and happy in their strength, and shunning the needy and afflicted and all who court it in their despair—but what I have done, has been for her. Help me for her sake, I implore you—not for mine, for hers!"

"I'm sorry I've got an appointment in the city," said Quilp, looking at his watch, with perfect self-possession, "or I should have been very glad to have spent half an hour with you while you composed yourself—very glad."

"Nay, Quilp, good Quilp," gasped the old man, catching at his skirts—"you and I have talked together more than once of her poor mother's story. The fear of her coming to poverty has perhaps been bred in me by that. Do not be hard upon me, but take that into account. You are a great gainer by me. Oh spare me the money for this one last hope!"

"I couldn't do it, really," said Quilp with unusual politeness, "though I tell you what—and this is a circumstance worth bearing in mind, as showing how the sharpest among us may be taken in sometimes—I was so deceived by the penurious way in which you lived, alone with Nelly—"

"All done to save money for tempting fortune, and make her triumph greater," cried the old man.

"Yes—yes, I understand that now," said Quilp; "but I was going to say, I was so deceived by that, your miserly way, the reputation you had among those who knew you of being rich, and your repeated assurances that you would make of my advances treble and quadruple the interest you paid me, that I'd have advanced you even now what you want, on your simple note of hand, though I had been led to suspect something wrong, if I hadn't unexpectedly become acquainted with your secret way of life."

"Who is it," retorted the old man, desperately, "that notwithstanding all my caution, told you that? Come. Let me know the name—the person."

The crafty dwarf, bethinking himself that his giving up the child would lead to the disclosure of the artifice he had employed, which, as nothing was to be gained by it, it was best to conceal, stopped short in his answer and said, "Now, who do you think?"

"It was Kit, it must have been the boy; he played the spy and you tampered with him?" said the old man.

"How came you to think of him?" said the dwarf, in a tone of great commiseration. "Yes it was Kit. Poor Kit!"

So saying, he nodded in a friendly manner, and took his leave, stopping when he had passed the outer door a little distance, and grinning with extraordinary delight.

"Poor Kit!" muttered Quilp. "I think it was Kit who said I was an uglier dwarf than could be seen anywhere for a penny wasn't it. Ha ha ha! Poor Kit!"

And with that he went his way, stil chuckling as he went.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

DANIEL QUILP neither entered nor left the old man's house, unobserved. In the shadow of an archway nearly opposite, leading to one of the many passages which diverged from the main street, there lingered one who having taken up his position when the twilight first came on, still maintained it with undiminished patience, and leaning against the wall with the manner of one who had a long time to wait, and being well used to it was quite resigned, scarcely changed his attitude for the hour together.

This patient lounger attracted little attention from any of those who passed, and bestowed as little upon them. His eyes were constantly directed towards one object, the window at which the child was accustomed to sit. If he withdrew them for a moment, it was only to glance at a clock in some neighbouring shop, and then to strain his sight once more in the old quarter with increased earnestness and attention.

It has been remarked that this personage evinced no weariness in his place of concealment, nor did he, long as his waiting was. But as the time went on, he manifested some anxiety and surprise, glancing at the clock more frequently, and at the window less hopefully than before. At length the clock was hidden from his sight by some envious shutters, then the church steeples proclaimed eleven at night, then the quarter-past, and then the conviction seemed to obtrude itself upon his mind that it was of no use tarrying there any longer.

That the conviction was an unwelcome one, and that he was by no means willing to yield to it, was apparent from his reluctance to quit the spot; from the tardy steps with which he often left it, still looking over his shoulder at the same window; and from the precipitation with which he as often returned, when a fancied noise, or the changing and imperfect light, induced him to suppose it had been softly raised. At length he gave the matter up as hopeless for that night, and suddenly breaking into a run as though to force himself away, scampered off at his utmost speed, nor once ventured to look behind him, lest he should be tempted back again.

Without relaxing his pace or stopping to take breath, this mysterious individual dashed on through a great many alleys and narrow ways, until he at length arrived in a square paved court, when he subsided into a walk, and making for a small house from the window of which a light was shining, lifted the latch of the door and passed in.

"Bless us!" cried a woman turning sharply round, "who's that?—Oh! it's you, Kit!"

"Yes, mother—it's me."

"Why, how tired you look, my dear!"

"Old master an't gone out to-night," said Kit; "and so she hasn't been at the window at all." With which words he sat down by the fire and looked very mournful and discontented.

The room in which Kit sat himself down in this condition was an extremely poor and homely place, but with that air of comfort about it, nevertheless, which—or the spot must be a wretched one indeed—cleanliness and order can always impart in some degree. Late as the Dutch clock showed it to be, the poor woman was still hard at work at an ironing-table; a young child lay sleeping in a cradle near the fire; and another, a sturdy boy of two or three years old, very wide awake, with a very tight night-cap on his head, and a night-gown very much too small for him on his body, was sitting bolt upright in a clothes-basket staring over the rim with his great round eyes, and looking as if he had thoroughly made up his mind never to go to sleep any more; which, as he had already declined to take his natural rest and had been brought out of bed in consequence, opened a cheerful prospect for his relations and friends. It was rather a queer-looking family; Kit, his mother, and the children, being all strongly alike.

Kit was disposed to be out of temper, as the best of us are too often—but he looked at the youngest child who was sleeping soundly, and from him to his other brother in the clothes-basket, and from him to their mother, who had been at work without complaint since morning, and thought it would be a better and kinder thing to be good-humoured. So he rocked the cradle with his foot, made a face at the rebel in the clothes-basket, which put him in high good-humour directly, and stoutly determined to be talkative and make himself agreeable.

"Ah mother!" said Kit, taking out his clasp-knife and falling upon a great piece of bread and meat which she had had ready for him, hours before, "what a one you are! There an't many such as you, I know."

"I hope there are many a great deal better, Kit," said Mrs. Nubbles; "and that there are, or ought to be, accordin' to what the parson at chapel says."

"Much *he* knows about it," returned Kit, contemptuously. "Wait till he's a widder and works like you do, and gets as

little, and does as much, and keeps his spirits up the same, and then I'll ask him what's o'clock, and trust him for being right to half a second."

"Well," said Mrs. Nubbles, evading the point, "your beer's down there by the fender, Kit."

"I see," replied her son, taking up the porter-pot, "my love to you, mother. And the parson's health too if you like. I don't bear him any malice, not I!"

"Did you tell me just now that your master hadn't gone out to-night?" inquired Mrs. Nubbles.

"Yes," said Kit, "worse luck."

"You should say better luck, I think," returned his mother, "because Miss Nelly won't have been left alone."

"Ah!" said Kit, "I forgot that. I said worse luck, because I've been watching ever since eight o'clock, and seen nothing of her."

"I wonder what she'd say," cried his mother, stopping in her work and looking round "if she knew that every night, when she — poor thing — is sitting alone at that window, you are watching in the open street for fear any harm should come to her, and that you never leave the place or come home to your bed, though you're ever so tired, till such time as you think she's safe in hers."

"Never mind what she'd say," replied Kit, with something like a blush on his uncouth face; "she'll never know nothing, and consequently, she'll never say nothing."

Mrs. Nubbles ironed away in silence for a minute or two, and coming to the fire-place for another iron, glanced stealthily at Kit while she rubbed it on a board and dusted it with a duster, but said nothing until she had returned to her table again, when holding the iron at an alarmingly short distance from her cheek, to test its temperature, and looking around with a smile, she observed:

"I know what some people would say, Kit—"

"Nonsense," interposed Kit, with a perfect apprehension of what was to follow.

"No, but they would indeed. Some people would say that you'd fallen in love with her, I know they would."

To this Kit only replied by bashfully bidding his mother "get out," and forming sundry strange figures with his legs and arms, accompanied by sympathetic contortions of his face. Not deriving from these means the relief which he sought, he bit off an immense mouthful from the bread and meat, and took a quick drink of the porter, by which artificial aids he choked himself, and effected a diversion of the subject.

"Speaking seriously though, Kit," said his mother, taking up the theme afresh

after a time, "for of course I was only in joke just now, it's very good and thoughtful, and like you, to do this, and never let any body know it, though some day I hope she may come to know it, for I'm sure she would be very grateful to you, and feel it very much. It's a cruel thing to keep the dear child shut up there. I don't wonder that the old gentleman wants to keep it from you."

"He don't think it's cruel, bless you," said Kit, "and don't mean it to be so, or he wouldn't do it—I do consider, mother, that he wouldn't do it for all the gold and silver in the world. No, no, that he wouldn't. I know him better than that."

"Then what does he do it for, and why does he keep it so close from you?" said Mrs. Nubbles.

"That I don't know," returned her son. "If he hadn't tried to keep it so close, though, I should never have found it out, for it was getting me away at night and sending me off so much earlier than he used to do, that first made me curious to know what was going on. Hark! what's that!"

"It's only somebody outside."

"It's somebody crossing over here,"—said Kit, standing up to listen, "and coming very fast too. He can't have gone out after I left, and the house caught fire, mother!"

The boy stood for a moment, really bereft, by the apprehension he had conjured up, of the power to move. The footsteps drew nearer, the door was opened with a hasty hand, and the child herself, pale and breathless, and hastily wrapped in a few disordered garments, hurried into the room.

"Miss Nelly! What is the matter?" cried mother and son together.

"I must not stay a moment," she returned, "grandfather has been taken very ill, I found him in a fit upon the floor—"

"I'll run for a doctor,"—said Kit, seizing his brimless hat. "I'll be there directly, I'll—"

"No, no," cried Nell, "there is one there, you're not wanted, you—you—must never come near us any more!"

"What!" roared Kit.

"Never again," said the child. "Don't ask me why, for I don't know. Pray don't ask me why, pray don't be sorry, pray don't be vexed with me, I have nothing to do with it indeed!"

Kit looked at her with his eyes stretched wide, and opened and shut his mouth a great many times, but couldn't get out one word.

"He complains and raves of you," said the child, "I don't know what you have done, but I hope it's nothing very bad."

"*I* done!" roared Kit.

"He cries that you're the cause of all his misery," returned the child, with tearful eyes; "he screamed and called for you, they say you must not come near him or he will die. You must not return to us any more. I came to tell you. I thought it would be better that I should come than somebody quite strange. Oh, Kit, what *have* you done? you, in whom I trusted so much, and who were almost the only friend I had!"

The unfortunate Kit looked at his young mistress harder and harder, and with eyes growing wider and wider, but was perfectly motionless and silent.

"I have brought his money for the week," said the child, looking to the woman and laying it on the table—"and—and—a little more, for he was always good and kind to me. I hope he will be sorry and do well somewhere else, and not take this to heart too much. It grieves me very much to part with him like this, but there is no help. It must be done. Good night!"

With tears streaming down her face, and her slight figure trembling with the agitation of the scene she had left, the shock she had received, the errand she had just discharged, and a thousand painful and affectionate feelings, the child hastened to the door, and disappeared as rapidly as she had come.

The poor woman, who had no cause to doubt her son but every reason for relying on his honesty and truth, was staggered notwithstanding by his not having advanced one word in his defence. Visions of gallantry, knavery, robbery; and of the nightly absences from home for which he had accounted so strangely, having been occasioned by some unlawful pursuit, flocked into her brain, and rendered her afraid to question him. She rocked herself upon a chair, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, but Kit made no attempt to comfort her, and remained quite bewildered. The baby in the cradle woke up and cried, the boy in the clothes-basket fell over on his back with the basket upon him and was seen no more, the mother wept louder yet and rocked faster, but Kit, insensible to all the din and tumult, remained in a state of utter stupefaction.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

Quiet and solitude were destined to hold uninterrupted rule no longer, beneath the roof that sheltered the child. Next morning the old man was in a raging fever accompanied with delirium, and sinking under the influence of this disorder he lay for many weeks in imminent peril of his life. There was watching enough now, but it was the watching of strangers who made of it a greedy trade, and who, in the intervals of their attendance upon the sick man, huddled together with a ghastly good-fellowship, and eat and drank and made merry;—for disease and death were their ordinary household gods.

Yet in all the hurry and crowding of such a time, the child was more alone than she had ever been before; alone in spirit, alone in her devotion to him who was wasting away upon his burning bed, alone in her unfeigned sorrow and her unpurchased sympathy. Day after day, and night after night, found her still by the pillow of the unconscious sufferer, still anticipating his every want, and still listening to those repetitions of her name, and those anxieties and cares for her, which were ever uppermost among his feverish wanderings.

The house was no longer theirs. Even the sick chamber seemed to be retained on the uncertain tenure of Mr. Quilp's favour. The old man's illness had not lasted many days when he took formal possession of the premises and all upon them, in virtue of certain legal powers to that effect which few understood and none presumed to call in question. This important step secured, with the assistance of a man of law whom he brought with him for the purpose, the dwarf proceeded to establish himself and his coadjutor in the house, as an assertion of his claim against all comers; and then set about making his quarters comfortable after his own fashion.

To this end, Mr. Quilp encamped in the back parlour, having first put an effectual stop to any further business by shutting up the shop. Having looked out from the old furniture the handsomest and most commodious chair he could possibly find, which he reserved for his own use, and an especially hideous and uncomfortable one, which he considerately appropriated to the accommodation of his friend, he caused them to be carried into this room and took up his position in great state. The apartment was very far removed from the old man's chamber, but Mr. Quilp deemed it prudent, as a precaution against infection from fever, and a means of wholesome fumigation, not only to smoke himself without cessation, but to insist upon it that his legal friend did the like. Moreover, he sent an express to the wharf for the tumbling boy, who arriving with all despatch was enjoined to sit himself down in another chair just inside the door, continually to smoke a great pipe which the dwarf had provided for the purpose, and to take it from his lips under any pretence whatever, were it only for one minute at a time, if he dared. These arrangements completed, Mr. Quilp looked round him with chuckling satisfaction, and remarked that he called that comfort.

The legal gentleman, whose melodious name was Brass, might have called it comfort also but for two drawbacks; one was that he could by no exertion sit easily in his chair, the seat of which was very hard, angular, slippery, and sloping; the other that tobacco-smoke always caused him great internal discomposure and annoyance. But as he was quite a creature of Mr. Quilp's and had a thousand reasons for conciliating his good opinion, he tried to smile, and nodded his acquiescence with the best grace he could assume.

This Brass was an attorney of no very good repute from Bevis Marks, in the city of London; he was a tall, meagre man, with a nose like a wen, a protruding forehead, retreating eyes, and hair of a deep red. He wore a long black surtout reaching nearly to his ancles, short black trousers, high shoes, and cotton stockings of a bluish grey. He had a cringing manner but a very harsh voice, and his blandest smiles were so extremely forbidding, that to have had his company under the least repulsive circumstances, one would have wished him to be out of temper that he might only scowl.

Quilp looked at his legal adviser, and seeing that he was winking very much in the anguish of his pipe, that he sometimes shuddered when he happened to inhale its full flavour, and that he constantly fanned the smoke from him, was quite overjoyed and rubbed his hands with glee.

"Smoke away, you dog," said Quilp, turning to the boy; "fill your pipe again and smoke it fast, down to the last whiff, or I'll put the sealing-waxed end of it in the fire, and rub it red hot upon your tongue."

Luckily the boy was case-hardened, and would have smoked a small lime-kiln if any

body had treated him with it. Wherefore he only muttered a brief defiance of his master, and did as he was ordered.

"Is it good, Brass, is it nice, is it fragrant, do you feel like the Grand Turk?" said Quilp.

Mr. Brass thought that if he did, the Grand Turk's feelings were by no means to be envied, but he said it was famous, and he had no doubt he felt very like that Potentate.

"This is the way to keep off fever," said Quilp, "this is the way to keep off every calamity of life. We'll never leave off all the time we stop here—smoke away you dog or you shall swallow the pipe."

"Shall we stop here long, Mr. Quilp?" inquired his legal friend, when the dwarf had given his boy this last gentle admonition.

"We must stop, I suppose, till the old gentleman up stairs is dead," returned Quilp.

"He he he!" laughed Mr. Brass, "oh! very good!"

"Smoke away!" cried Quilp. "Never stop! You can talk as you smoke. Don't lose time"

"He he he!" cried Brass, faintly, as he again applied himself to the odious pipe. "But if he should get better, Mr. Quilp?"

"Then we shall stop still he does, and no longer," returned the dwarf.

"How kind it is of you, sir, to wait till then!" said Brass. "Some people, sir, would have sold or removed the goods—oh dear, the very instant the law allowed 'em. Some people, sir, would have been all flintiness and granite. Some people, sir, would have—"

"Some people would have spared themselves the jabbering of such a parrot as you," interposed the dwarf.

"He he he!" cried Brass. "You have *such* spirits!"

The smoking sentinel at the door interposed in this place, and without taking his pipe from his lips, growled,

"Here's the gal a comin' down."

"The what, you dog?" said Quilp

"The gal," returned the boy. "Are you deaf?"

"Oh!" said Quilp, drawing in his breath with great relish, as if he were taking soup, "you and I will have such a settling presently, there's such a scratching and bruising in store for you, my dear young

friend. Aha! Nelly! How is he now, my duck of diamonds?"

"He 's very bad," replied the weeping child.

"What a pretty little Nell!" cried Quilp.

"Oh beautiful, sir, beautiful indeed," said Brass. "Quite charming."

"Has she come to sit upon Quilp's knee?" said the dwarf, in what he meant to be a soothing tone, "or is she going to bed in her own little room inside here—which is poor Nelly going to do?"

"What a remarkable pleasant way he has with children!" muttered Brass, as if in confidence between himself and the ceiling; "upon my word it 's quite a treat to hear him."

"I'm not going to stay at all," faltered Nell. "I want a few things out of that room, and then I — I — won't come down here any more."

"And a very nice little room it is!" said the dwarf, looking into it as the child entered. "Quite a bower. You 're sure you 're not going to use it, you 're sure you 're not coming back, Nelly?"

"No," replied the child, hurrying away, with the few articles of dress she had come to remove; "never again, never again."

"She 's very sensitive," said Quilp, looking after her. "Very sensitive; that 's a pity. The bedstead is much about my size. I think I shall make it *my* little room."

Mr. Brass encouraging this idea, as he would have encouraged any other emanating from the same source, the dwarf walked in to try the effect, which he did by throwing himself on his back upon the bed with his pipe in his mouth, and then kicking up his legs and smoking violently. Mr. Brass applauding this picture very much, and the bed being soft and comfortable, Mr. Quilp determined to use it, both as a sleeping place by night and as a kind of Divan by day, and in order that it might be converted to the latter purpose at once, remained where he was and smoked his pipe out. The legal gentleman being by this time rather giddy and perplexed in his ideas (for this was one of the operations of the tobacco upon his nervous system,) took the opportunity of slinking away into the open air, where in course of time he recovered sufficiently to return with a countenance of tolerable composure. He was soon led on by the malicious dwarf to smoke himself into a relapse, and in that state stumbled upon a settee where he slept till morning.

Such were Mr. Quilp's first proceedings on entering upon his new property. He was for some days restrained by business from performing any particular pranks, as his time was pretty well occupied between taking, with the assistance of Mr. Brass, a minute inventory of all the goods in the place, and going abroad upon his other concerns, which happily engaged him for several hours at a time. His avarice and caution being now thoroughly awakened, however, he was never absent from the house one night, and his eagerness for some termination, good or bad, to the old man's disorder, increasing rapidly as the time passed by, soon began to vent itself in open murmurs and exclamations of impatience.

Nell shrunk timidly from all the dwarf's advances towards conversation, and fled from the very sound of his voice, nor were the lawyer's smiles less terrible to her than Quilp's grimaces. She lived in such continual dread and apprehension of meeting one or other of them upon the stairs or in the passages if she stirred from her grandfather's chamber, that she seldom left it for a moment until late at night, when the silence encouraged her to venture forth, and breathe the purer air of some empty room.

One night she had stolen to her usual window and was sitting there very sorrowfully, for the old man had been worse that day, when she thought she heard her name pronounced by a voice in the street, and looking down, recognised Kit whose endeavours to attract her attention had roused her from her sad reflections.

"Miss Nell!" said the boy, in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the child, doubtful whether she ought to hold any conversation with the supposed culprit, but inclining to her old favourite still, — "what do you want?"

"I have wanted to say a word to you for a long time," the boy replied, "but the people below have driven me away and wouldn't let me see you. You don't believe — I hope you really don't believe—that I deserve to be cast off as I have been, do you, Miss?"

"I must believe it," returned the child. "Or why would grandfather have been so angry with you?"

"I don't know," replied Kit. "I 'm sure I've never deserved it from him—no, nor from you. I can say that with a true and honest heart, any way. And then to be driven from the door, when I only came to ask how old master was—!"

"They never told me that," said the child. "I didn't know, indeed. I wouldn't have had them do it for the world."

"Thank'ee, Miss," returned Kit, "its comfortable to hear you say that. I said I

never would believe that it was your doing."

"That was right!" said the child eagerly.

"Miss Nell," cried the boy, coming under the window and speaking in a lower tone, "there are new masters down stairs. It's a change for you."

"It is, indeed," replied the child.

"And so it will be for him, when he gets better," said the boy, pointing towards the sick room.

"—If he ever does," added the child, unable to restrain her tears.

"Oh, he'll do that,—he'll do that," said Kit, "I'm sure he will. You mustn't be cast down, Miss Nell. Now don't be, pray."

These words of encouragement and consolation were few and roughly said, but they affected the child and made her for the moment weep the more.

"He'll be sure to get better now," said the boy, anxiously, "if you don't give way to low spirits and turn ill yourself, which would make him worse and throw him back just as he was recovering. When he does, say a good word—a kind word for me, Miss Nell."

"They tell me I must not even mention your name to him for a long, long time," rejoined the child, "I dare not; and even if I might, what good would a kind word do you, Kit? We shall be very poor.—We shall scarcely have bread to eat."

"It's not that I may be taken back," said the boy, "that I ask the favour of you. It isn't for the sake of food and wages that I've been waiting about so long in hopes to see you. Don't think I'd come in a time of trouble to talk of such things as them."

The child looked gratefully and kindly at him, but waited that he might speak again.

"No, it's not that," said Kit, hesitating, "it's something very different from that.—I haven't got much sense, I know, but if he could be brought to believe that I'd been a faithful servant to him, doing the best I could, and never meaning him harm, perhaps he mightn't"—

Here Kit faltered so long that the child entreated him to speak out, and quickly, for it was very late, and time to shut the window.

"Perhaps he mightn't think it over venturesome of me to say—well then to say this," cried Kit, with sudden boldness.—"This home is gone from you and him. Mother and I have got a poor one, but that's better than this with all these people here, and why not come there, till he's had time to look about and find a better?"

The child did not speak. Kit, in the relief of having made his proposition, found his tongue loosened, and spoke out in its favour with the utmost eloquence.

"You think," said the boy, "that it's very small and inconvenient. So it is, but it's very clean. Perhaps you think it would be noisy, but there's not a quieter court than ours in all the town. Don't be afraid of the children; the baby hardly ever cries, and the other one is very good—besides, *I*'d mind 'em. They wouldn't vex you much, I'm sure. Do try Miss Nell, do try. The little front room up stairs is very pleasant. You can see a piece of the church-clock through the chimneys and almost tell the time; mother says it would be just the thing for you, and so it would, and you'd have her to wait upon you both, and me to run of errands. We don't mean money, bless you; you're not to think of that.—Will you try him, Miss Nell? Only say you'll try him. Do try to make old master come, and ask him first what I have done — will you only promise that, Miss Nell?"

Before the child could reply to this earnest solicitation, the street-door opened, and Mr. Brass thrusting out his night-capped head, called in a surly voice, "Who's there!" Kit immediately glided away, and Nell, closing the windows softly, withdrew into the room.

Before Mr. Brass had repeated his inquiry many times, Mr. Quilp, also embellished with a night-cap, emerged from the same door and looked carefully up and down the street, and up at all the windows of the house from the opposite side. Finding that there was nobody in sight, he presently returned into the house with his legal friend, protesting (as the child heard from the staircase), that there was a league and plot against him, that he was in danger of being robbed and plundered by a band of conspirators who prowled about the house at all seasons, and that he would no longer delay but take immediate steps for disposing of the property and returning to his own peaceful roof. Having growled forth these and a great many other threats of a like nature, he coiled himself once more in the child's little bed, and Nell crept softly up the stairs.

It was natural enough that her short and unfinished dialogue with Kit, should leave a strong impression on her mind, and influence her dreams that night and her recollections for a long, long time. Surrounded by unfeeling creditors, and mercenary attendants upon the sick, and meeting in the height of her anxiety and sorrow

with little regard or sympathy even from the women about her, it is not surprising that the affectionate heart of the child should have been touched to the quick by one kind and generous spirit, however uncouth the temple in which it dwelt. Thank Heaven that the temples of such spirits are not made with hands, and that they may be more worthily hung with poor patchwork than with purple and fine linen.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

At length the crisis of the old man's disorder was past, and he began to mend. By very slow and feeble degrees his consciousness came back, but the mind was weakened and its functions were impaired. He was patient, and quiet; often sat brooding, but not despondently, for a long space; was easily amused even by a sun-beam on the wall or ceiling; made no complaint that the days were long or the nights tedious; and appeared indeed to have lost all count of time and every sense of care or weariness. He would sit for hours together with Nell's small hand in his, playing with the fingers and stopping sometimes to smooth her hair or kiss her brow, and when he saw that tears were glistening in her eyes would look, amazed, about him for the cause, and forget his wonder even while he looked.

The child and he rode out: the old man propped up with pillows, and the child beside him. They were hand in hand as usual. The noise and motion in the streets fatigued his brain at first, but he was not surprised, or curious, or pleased, or irritated. He was asked if he remembered this, or that. 'Oh yes,' he said, 'quite well — why not?' Sometimes he turned his head and looked with earnest gaze and outstretched neck after some stranger in the crowd, until he disappeared from sight, but to the question why he did this, he answered not a word.

He was sitting in his easy chair one day, and Nell upon a stool beside him, when a man outside the door inquired if he might enter. 'Yes,' he said, without emotion, "it was Quilp, he knew. Quilp was master there. Of course he might come in.' And so he did.

"I'm glad to see you well again at last, neighbour," said the dwarf sitting down opposite to him. "You're quite strong now!"

"Yes," said the old man feebly, "yes."

"I don't want to hurry you, you know, neighbour," said the dwarf, raising his voice, for the old man's senses were duller than they had been; "but as soon as you *can* arrange your future proceedings, the better."

"Surely," said the old man. "The better for all parties."

"You see," pursued Quilp, after a short pause, "the goods being once removed, this house would be uncomfortable; uninhabitable in fact."

"You say true," returned the old man. "Poor Nell, too, what would *she* do?"

"Exactly," bawled the dwarf nodding his head; "that's very well observed. Then will you consider about it, neighbour?"

"I will certainly," replied the old man. "We shall not stop here."

"So I supposed," said the dwarf. "I have sold the things. They have not yielded quite as much as they might have done, but pretty well — pretty well. To-day's Tuesday. When shall they be moved? There's no hurry—shall we say this afternoon?"

"Say Friday morning," returned the old man.

"Very good," said the dwarf. "So be it,—with the understanding that I can't go beyond that day neighbour, on any account."

"Good," returned the old man. "I shall remember it."

Mr. Quilp seemed rather puzzled by the strange, even, spiritless way in which all this was said; but as the old man nodded his head and repeated "on Friday morning—I shall remember it," he had no excuse for dwelling upon the subject any further, and so took a friendly leave with many expressions of good-will and many compliments to his friend on his looking so remarkably well; and went below stairs to report progress to Mr. Brass.

All that day and all the next, the old man remained in this state. He wandered up and down the house and into and out of the various rooms, as if with some vague

intent of bidding them adieu, but he referred neither by direct allusions nor in any other manner to the interview of the morning or the necessity of finding some other shelter. An indistinct idea he had that the child was desolate and in want of help, for he often drew her to his bosom and bade her be of good cheer, saying that they would not desert each other; but he seemed unable to contemplate their real position more distinctly, and was still the listless, passionless creature, that suffering of mind and body had left him.

We call this a state of childishness, but it is the same poor hollow mockery of it, that death is of sleep. Where, in the dull eyes of doating men, are the laughing light and life of childhood, the gaiety that has known no check, the frankness that has felt no chill, the hope that has never withered, the joys that fade in blossoming? Where, in the sharp lineaments of rigid and unsightly death, is the calm beauty of slumber, telling of rest for the waking hours that are past, and gentle hopes and loves for those which are to come? Lay death and sleep down, side by side, and say who shall find the two akin. Send forth the child and childish man together, and blush for the pride that libels our own old happy state, and gives its title to an ugly and distorted image.

Thursday arrived, and there was no alteration in the old man. But a change came upon him that evening as he and the child sat silently together.

In a small dull yard below his window there was a tree — green and flourishing enough, for such a place — and as the air stirred among its leaves, it threw a rippling shadow on the white wall. The old man sat watching the shadows as they trembled in this patch of light until the sun went down, and when it was night and the moon was slowly rising he still sat in the same spot.

To one who had been tossing on a restless bed so long, even these few green leaves and this tranquil light, although it languished among chimneys and house-tops, were pleasant things. They suggested quiet places afar off, and rest, and peace.

The child thought more than once that he was moved, and had forborne to speak. But now he shed tears—tears that it lightened her aching heart to see—and making as though he would fall upon his knees, besought her to forgive him.

"Forgive you—what?" said Nell, interposing to prevent his purpose. "Oh grandfather, what should *I* forgive?"

"All that is past, all that has come upon thee, Nell, all that was done in that uneasy dream," returned the old man.

"Do not talk so," said the child. "Pray do not. Let us speak of something else."

"Yes, yes, we will," he rejoined. "And it shall be of what we talked of long ago—many months — months is it, or weeks, or days? which is it, Nell?"

"I do not understand you" — said the child.

"It has come back upon me to-day, it has all come back since we have been sitting here. I bless thee for it, Nell!"

"For what, dear grandfather?"

"For what you said when we were first made beggars, Nell. Let us speak softly. Hush! for if they knew our purpose down stairs, they would cry that I was mad and take thee from me. We will not stop here another day. We will go far away from here."

"Yes, let us go," said the child earnestly. "Let us be gone from this place, and never turn back or think of it again. Let us wander barefoot through the world, rather than linger here."

"We will"—answered the old man, "we will travel afoot through fields and woods, and by the side of rivers, and trust ourselves to God in the places where he dwells. It is far better to lie down at night beneath an open sky like that yonder — see how bright it is — than to rest in close rooms which are always full of care and weary dreams. Thou and I together, Nell, may be cheerful and happy yet, and learn to forget this time, as if it had never been."

"We will be happy," cried the child. "We never can be here."

"No, we never can again—never again—that's truly said," rejoined the old man. "Let us steal away to-morrow morning—early and softly that we may not be seen or heard—and leave no trace or track for them to follow by. Poor Nell, thy cheek is pale and thy eyes are heavy with watching and weeping—with watching and weeping for me—I know—for me; but thou wilt be well again, and merry too, when we are far away. To-morrow morning, dear, we'll turn our faces from this scene of sorrows, and be as free and happy as the birds."

And then the old man clasped his hands above her head, and said in a few broken words that from that time forth they would wander up and down together, and never part more until Death took one or other of the twain.

The child's heart beat high with hope and confidence. She had no thought of hunger or cold, or thirst, or suffering. She saw in this, but a return of the simple pleasures they had once enjoyed, a relief from the gloomy solitude in which she had lived, an escape from the heartless people by

whom she nad been surrounded in her late time of trial, the restoration of the old man's health and peace, and a life of tranquil happiness. Sun, and stream, and meadow, and summer days, shone brightly in her view, and there was no dark tint in all the sparkling picture.

The old man had slept for some hours soundly in his bed, and she was yet busily engaged in preparing for their flight. There were a few articles of clothing for herself to carry, and a few for him; old garments, such as became their fallen fortune, laid out to wear; and a staff to support his feeble steps, put ready for his use. But this was not all her task, for now she must visit the old rooms for the last time.

And how different the parting with them was from any she had expected, and most of all from that which she had oftenest pictured to herself! How could she ever have thought of bidding them farewell in triumph, when the recollection of the many hours she had passed among them rose to her swelling heart, and made her feel the wish a cruelty, lonely and sad though many of those hours had been! She sat down at the window where she had spent so many evenings—darker far than this—and every thought of hope or cheerfulness that had occurred to her in that place came vividly upon her mind, and blotted out all its dull and mournful associations in an instant.

Her own little room too where she had so often knelt down and prayed at night—prayed for the time which she hoped was dawning now—the little room where she had slept so peacefully, and dreamed such pleasant dreams—it was hard not to be able to glance round it once more, and to be forced to leave it without one kind look or grateful tear. There were some trifles there—poor useless things—that she would have liked to take away; but that was impossible.

This brought to her mind, her poor bird, who hung there yet. She wept bitterly for the loss of this little creature—until the idea occurred to her—she did not know how or why it came into her head—that it might by some means fall into the hands of Kit, who would keep it for her sake, and think perhaps that she had left it behind in the hope that he might have it, and as an assurance that she was grateful to him. She was calmed and comforted by the thought and went to rest with a lighter heart.

From many dreams of rambling through light and sunny places, but with some vague object unattained which ran indistinctly through them all, she awoke to find that it was yet night, and that the stars were shining brightly in the sky. At length the day began to glimmer and the stars to grow pale and dim. As soon as she was sure of this, she arose, and dressed herself for the journey.

The old man was yet asleep, and as she was unwilling to disturb him, she left him to slumber on until the sun rose. He was anxious that they should leave the house without a minute's loss of time, and was soon ready.

The child then took him by the hand, and they trod lightly and cautiously down the stairs, trembling whenever a board creaked, and often stopping to listen. The old man had forgotten a kind of wallet which contained the light burden he had to carry, and the going back to fetch it seemed an interminable delay.

At last they reached the passage on the ground floor, where the snoring of Mr. Quilp and his legal friend sounded more terrible in their ears than the roars of lions. The bolts of the door were rusty, and difficult to unfasten without noise. When they were all drawn back it was found to be locked, and, worst of all, the key was gone. The child remembered, for the first time, one of the nurses having told her that Quilp always locked both the house-doors at night, and kept the keys on the table in his bedroom.

It was not without great fear and trepidation that little Nell slipped off her shoes, and gliding through the store-room of old curiosities, where Mr. Brass—the ugliest piece of goods in all the stock—lay sleeping on a mattress, passed into her own little chamber.

Here she stood for a few moments quite transfixed with terror at the sight of Mr. Quilp, who was hanging so far out of bed that he almost seemed to be standing on his head, and who, either from the uneasiness of this posture or in one of his agreeable habits, was gasping and growling with his mouth wide open, and the whites (or rather the dirty yellows) of his eyes distinctly visible. It was no time, however, to ask whether any thing ailed him, so possessing herself of the key, after one hasty glance about the room, and repassing the prostrate Mr. Brass, she rejoined the old man in safety. They got the door open without noise, and passing into the street, stood still.

"Which way?" said the child.

The old man looked irresolutely and helplessly, first at her, then to the right and left, then at her again, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgiving, and putting her hand in his, led him gently away

It was the beginning of a day in June; the deep blue sky unsullied by a cloud, and teeming with brilliant light. The streets were as yet nearly free from passengers, the houses and shops were closed, and the healthful air of the morning fell like breath from angels, on the sleeping town.

The old man and the child passed on through the glad silence, elate with hope and pleasure. They were alone together once again; every object was bright and fresh; nothing reminded them, otherwise than by contrast, of the monotony and constraint they had left behind; church-towers and steeples, frowning and dark at other times, now shone and dazzled in the sun; each humble nook and corner rejoiced in light; and the sky, dimmed by excessive distance, shed its placid smile on everything beneath.

Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

Daniel Quilp of Tower Hill, and Sampson Brass of Bevis Marks in the city of London, Gentleman, one of her Majesty's attorneys of the Courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas at Westminster, and a solicitor of the High Court of Chancery, slumbered on unconscious and unsuspicious of any mischance, until a knocking at the street door, often repeated and gradually mounting up from a modest single rap into a perfect battery of knocks, fired in long discharges with a very short interval between, caused the said Daniel Quilp to struggle into a horizontal position, and to stare at the ceiling with a drowsy indifference, betokening that he heard the noise and rather wondered at the same, but couldn't be at the trouble of bestowing any further thought upon the subject.

As the knocking, however, instead of accommodating itself to his lazy state, increased in vigour and became more importunate, as if in earnest remonstrance against his falling asleep again now that he had once opened his eyes, Daniel Quilp began by degrees to comprehend the possibility of there being somebody at the door, and thus gradually came to recollect that it was Friday morning, and he had ordered Mrs. Quilp to be in waiting upon him at an early hour.

Mr. Brass, after writhing about in a great many strange attitudes, and often twisting his face and eyes into an expression like that which is usually produced by eating gooseberries very early in the season, was by this time awake also, and seeing that Mr. Quilp invested himself in his every-day garments, hastened to do the like, putting on his shoes before his stockings, and thrusting his legs into his coat-sleeves, and making such other small mistakes in his toilet as are not uncommon to those who dress in a hurry, and labour under the agitation of having been suddenly roused.

While the attorney was thus engaged, the dwarf was groping under the table, muttering desperate imprecations upon himself and mankind in general, and all inanimate objects to boot, which suggested to Mr. Brass the question, "what's the matter?"

"The key," said the dwarf, looking viciously at him, "the door-key,—that's the matter. D'ye know anything of it?"

"How should I know anything of it, sir?" returned Mr. Brass.

"How should you," repeated Quilp with a sneer. "You're a nice lawyer, an't you? Ugh, you idiot!"

Not caring to represent to the dwarf in his present humour, that the loss of a key by another person could scarcely be said to affect his (Brass's) legal knowledge in any material degree, Mr. Brass humbly suggested that it must have been forgotten over night, and was doubtless at that moment in its native key-hole. Notwithstanding that Mr. Quilp had a strong conviction to the contrary, founded on his recollection of having carefully taken it out, he was fain to admit that this was possible, and therefore went grumbling to the door, where, sure enough, he found it.

Now, just as Mr. Quilp laid his hand upon the lock and saw with great astonishment that the fastenings were undone, the knocking came again with most irritating violence, and the day-light which had been shining through the key-hole was intercepted on the outside by a human eye. The dwarf was very much exasperated, and wanting somebody to wreak his ill-humour upon, determined to dart out suddenly and favour Mrs. Quilp with a gentle acknowledgment of her attention in making that hideous uproar.

With this view he drew back the lock very silently and softly, and opening the door all at once, pounced out upon the person on the other side, who had at that moment raised the knocker for another application, and at whom the dwarf ran head first, throwing out his hands and feet together, and biting the air in the fulness of his malice.

So far, however, from rushing upon somebody who offered no resistance and implored his mercy, Mr. Quilp was no sooner in the arms of the individual whom he had taken for his wife than he found himself complimented with two staggering blows on the head, and two more, of the same quality in the chest, and closing with his assailant, such a shower of buffets rained down upon his person as sufficed to convince him that he was in skilful and experienced hands. Nothing daunted by this reception, he clung tight to his opponent, and bit and hammered away with such good-will and heartiness, that it was at least a couple of minutes before he was dislodged. Then, and not until then, Daniel Quilp found himself, all flushed and dishevelled, in the middle of the street, with Mr. Richard Swiveller performing a kind of dance round him, and

requiring to know "whether he wanted any more."

"There's plenty more of it at the same shop," said Mr. Swiveller, by turns advancing and retreating in a threatening attitude, "a large and extensive assortment always on hand — country orders executed with promptitude and despatch — will you have a little more, sir — don't say no, if you'd rather not."

"I thought it was somebody else," said Quilp rubbing his shoulders, "why didn't you say who you were?"

"Why didn't you say who *you* were?" returned Dick, "instead of flying out of the house like a Bedlamite?"

"It was you that — that knocked," said the dwarf, getting up with a short groan, "was it?"

"Yes, I'm the man," replied Dick. "That lady had begun when I came, but she knocked too soft, so I relieved her." As he said this, he pointed towards Mrs. Quilp, who stood trembling at a little distance.

"Humph!" muttered the dwarf, darting an angry look at his wife "I thought it was your fault. And you, sir,—don't you know there has been somebody ill here, that you knock as if you'd beat the door down?"

"Damme!" answered Dick, "that's why I did it. I thought there was somebody dead here."

"You came for some purpose, I suppose," said Quilp. "What is it you want?"

"I want to know how the old gentleman is," rejoined Mr. Swiveller, "and to hear from Nell herself, with whom I should like to have a little talk. I'm a friend of the family, sir,—at least I'm the friend of one of the family, and that's the same thing."

"You'd better walk in then," said the dwarf. "Go on, sir, go on. Now, Mrs. Quilp — after you, ma'm."

Mrs. Quilp hesitated, but Mr. Quilp insisted. And it was not a contest of politeness, or by any means a matter of form, for she knew very well that her husband wished to enter the house in this order that he might have a favourable opportunity of inflicting a few pinches on her arms, which were seldom free from impressions of his fingers in black and blue colours. Mr. Swiveller who was not in the secret was a little surprised to hear a suppressed scream, and, looking round, to see Mrs. Quilp following him with a sudden jerk; but he did not remark on these appearances, and soon forgot them.

"Now Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf when they had entered the shop, "go you up

stairs if you please to Nelly's room, and tell her that she's wanted."

"You seem to make yourself at home here," said Dick, who was unacquainted with Mr. Quilp's authority.

"I *am* at home, young gentleman," returned the dwarf.

Dick was pondering what these words might mean, and still more what the presence of Mr. Brass might mean, when Mrs. Quilp came hurrying down stairs, declaring that the rooms above were empty.

"Empty, you fool!" said the dwarf.

"I give you my word, Quilp," answered his trembling wife, "that I have been into every room and there's not a soul in any of them."

"And that," said Mr. Brass, clapping his hands once with an emphasis, "explains the mystery of the key!"

Quilp looked frowningly at him, and frowningly at his wife, and frowningly at Richard Swiveller; but receiving no enlightenment from any of them hurried up stairs, whence he soon hurried down again, confirming the report which had been already made.

"It's a strange way of going," he said, glancing at Swiveller, "very strange not to communicate with me who am such a close and intimate friend of his. Ah! he'll write to me no doubt, or he'll bid Nelly write — yes, yes, that's what he'll do. Nelly's very fond of me. Pretty Nell!"

Mr. Swiveller looked, as he was, all open-mouthed astonishment. Still glancing furtively at him, Quilp turned to Mr. Brass and observed with assumed carelessness that this need not interfere with the removal of the goods.

"For indeed," he added, "we knew that they'd go away to-day, but not that they'd go so early or so quietly. But they have their reasons, they have their reasons."

"Where in the devil's name are they gone?" said the wondering Dick.

Quilp shook his head and pursed up his lips in a manner which implied that he knew very well, but was not at liberty to say.

"And what," said Dick, looking at the confusion about him, "what do you mean by moving the goods?"

"That I have bought 'em, sir," rejoined Quilp. "Eh? What then?"

"Has the sly old fox made his fortune then, and gone to live in a tranquil cot in a pleasant spot with a distant view of the changing sea?" said Dick, in great bewilderment.

"Keeping his place of retirement very close, that he may not be visited too often by affectionate grandsons and their devoted friends, eh?" added the dwarf, rubbing his hands hard; "*I* say nothing, but is that your meaning, sir?"

Richard Swiveller was utterly aghast at this unexpected alteration of circumstances, which threatened the complete overthrow of the project in which he bore so conspicuous a part, and seemed to nip his prospects in the bud. Having only received from Frederick Trent, late on the previous night, information of the old man's illness, he had come upon a visit of condolence and inquiry to Nell, prepared with the first instalment of that long train of fascinations which was to fire her heart at last. And here, when he had been thinking of all kinds of graceful and insinuating approaches, and meditating on the fearful retaliation which was slowly working against Sophy Wackles — here were Nell, the old man, and all the money gone, melted away, decamped he knew not whither, as if with a foreknowledge of the scheme and a resolution to defeat it in the very outset, before a step was taken.

In his secret heart, Daniel Quilp was both surprised and troubled by the flight which had been made. It had not escaped his keen eye that some indispensable articles of clothing were gone with the fugitives, and knowing the old man's weak state of mind, he marvelled what that course of proceeding might be in which he had so readily procured the concurrence of the child. It must not be supposed (or it would be a gross injustice to Mr. Quilp) that he was tortured by any disinterested anxiety on behalf of either. His uneasiness arose from a misgiving that the old man had some secret store of money which he had not suspected, and the bare idea of its escaping his clutches, overwhelmed him with mortification and self-reproach.

In this frame of mind, it was some consolation to him to find that Richard Swiveller, was, for different reasons, evidently irritated and disappointed by the same cause. It was plain, thought the dwarf, that he had come there on behalf of his friend, to cajole or frighten the old man out of some small fraction of that wealth of which they supposed him to have an abundance. Therefore it was a relief to vex his heart with a picture of the riches the old man hoarded, and to expatiate on his cunning in removing himself even beyond the reach of importunity.

"Well," said Dick, with a blank look, "I suppose it's of no use staying here."

"Not the least in the world," rejoined the dwarf.

"You'll mention that I called, perhaps," said Dick.

Mr. Quilp nodded, and said he certainly would, the very first time he saw them.

"And say," added Mr. Swiveller, "say, sir, that I was wafted here upon the pinions of concord, that I came to remove, with the rake of friendship, the seeds of mutual wiolence and heart-burning, and to sow in their place, the germs of social harmony. Will you have the goodness to charge yourself with that commission, sir?"

"Certainly!" rejoined Quilp.

"Will you be kind enough to add to it, sir," said Dick, producing a very small limp card, "that *that* is my address, and that I am to be found at home every morning.—Two distinct knocks, sir, will produce the slavey at any time. My particular friends, sir, are accustomed to sneeze when the door is opened, to give her to understand that they *are* my friends and have no interested motives in asking if I'm at home. I beg your pardon; will you allow me to look at that card again?"

"Oh! by all means," rejoined Quilp.

"By a slight and not unnatural mistake, sir," said Dick, substituting another in its stead, "I had handed you the pass-ticket of a select convivial circle called the Glorious Apollers, of which I have the honour to be Perpetual Grand. That is the proper document, sir. Good morning."

Quilp bade him good day; the Perpetual Grand Master of the Glorious Apollers, elevating his hat in honour of Mrs. Quilp, dropped it carelessly on the side of his head again, and disappeared with a flourish.

By this time certain vans had arrived for the conveyance of the goods, and divers strong men in carpet caps were balancing chests of drawers and other trifles of that nature upon their heads, and performed muscular feats which heightened their complexions considerably. Not to be behindhand in the bustle, Mr. Quilp went to work with surprising vigour; bustling and driving the people about him like an evil spirit; setting Mrs. Quilp upon all kinds of arduous and impracticable tasks; carrying great weights up and down with no apparent effort; kicking the boy from the wharf whenever he could get near him; and inflicting with his loads a great many sly bumps and blows upon the shoulders of Mr. Brass, as he stood upon the door-steps to answer all the inquiries of curious neighbours, which was his department. His presence and example diffused such alacrity among the persons employed, that in a few hours the house was emptied of everything, but pieces of matting, empty porter-pots, and scattered fragments of straw.

Seated, like an African chief, on one of these pieces of matting, the dwarf was regaling himself in the parlour with bread and cheese and beer, when he observed, without appearing to do so, that a boy was prying in at the outer-door. Assured that it was Kit, though he saw little more than his nose, Mr. Quilp hailed him by his name; whereupon Kit came in and demanded what he wanted.

"Come here, you, sir," said the dwarf. "Well, so your old master and young mistress have gone."

"Where?" rejoined Kit, looking round.

"Do you mean to say you don't know where?" answered Quilp, sharply. "Where have they gone, eh!"

"I don't know," said Kit.

"Come," retorted Quilp, "let's have no more of this. Do you mean to say that you don't know they went away by stealth as soon as it was light this morning?"

"No," said the boy, in evident surprise.

"You don't know that?" cried Quilp.—"Don't I know that you were hanging about the house the other night like a thief, eh? Weren't you told then?"

"No," replied the boy.

"You were not?" said Quilp. "What were you told then, what were you talking about?"

Kit, who knew no particular reason why he should keep the matter secret now, related the purpose for which he had come on that occasion, and the proposal he had made.

"Oh!" said the dwarf, after a little consideration. "Then I think they'll come to you, yet."

"Do you think they will?" cried Kit eagerly.

"Ay, I think they will," returned the dwarf. "Now, when they do, let me know, d'ye hear? Let me know, and I'll give you something. I want to do 'em a kindness, and I can't do 'em a kindness unless I know where they are. You hear what I say?"

Kit might have returned some answer which would not have been agreeable to his irascible questioner, if the boy from the wharf, who had been skulking about the room in search of any thing that might have been left about by accident, had not happened to cry, "Here's a bird. What's to be done with this?"

"Wring its neck," rejoined Quilp.

"Oh no, don't do that," said Kit, stepping forward. "Give it to me."

"Oh yes, I dare say," cried the other boy. "Come, you let the cage alone, and let me wring its neck, will you. He said I was to do it. You let the cage alone, will you."

"Give it here, give it to me, you dogs," roared Quilp. "Fight for it, you dogs, or I'll wring its neck myself."

Without further persuasion, the two boys fell upon each other, tooth and nail, while

Quilp holding up the cage in one hand, and chopping the ground with his knife in an ecstasy, urged them on by his taunts and cries to fight more fiercely. They were a pretty equal match, and rolled about together exchanging blows which were by no means child's play, until at length Kit, planting a well-directed hit in his adversary's chest, disengaged himself, sprung nimbly up, and snatching the cage from Quilp's hands, made off with his prize.

He did not stop once until he reached home, where his bleeding face occasioned great consternation, and caused the elder child to howl dreadfully.

"Goodness gracious, Kit, what is the matter, what have you been doing?" cried Mrs. Nubbles.

"Never you mind, mother," answered her son, wiping his face on the jack-towel, behind the door. "I'm not hurt, don't you be afraid for me. I've been a fightin' for a bird, and won him, that's all. Hold your noise, little Jacob. I never see such a naughty boy in all my days!"

"You have been fighting for a bird!" exclaimed his mother.

"Ah! fightin' for a bird," replied Kit, "and here he is—Miss Nelly's bird, mother, that they was a goin' to wring the neck of. I stopped that though—ha, ha, ha! They wouldn't wring his neck, and me by,—no, no. It wouldn't do, mother, it wouldn't do, at all. Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit laughing so heartily, with his swoln and bruised face, looking out of the towel, made little Jacob laugh, and then his mother laughed, and then the baby crowed and kicked with great glee, and then they all laughed in concert, partly because of Kit's triumph, and partly because they were very fond of each other. When this fit was over, Kit exhibited the bird to both children, as a great and precious rarity—it was only a poor linnet—and looking about the wall for an old nail, made a scaffolding of a chair and table, and twisted it out with great exultation.

"Let me see," said the boy, "I think I'll hang him in the winder, because it's more light and cheerful, and he can see the sky there, if he looks up very much. He's such a one to sing, I can tell you!"

So, the scaffolding was made again, and Kit, climbing up with the poker for a hammer, knocked in the nail and hung up the cage to the immeasurable delight of the whole family. When it had been adjusted and straightened a great many times, and he had walked backwards into the fire-place, in his admiration of it, the arrangement was pronounced to be perfect.

"And now, mother," said the boy, "before I rest any more, I'll go out and see if I can find a horse to hold, and then I can buy some bird-seed, and a bit of something nice for you, into the bargain."

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

As it was very easy for Kit to persuade himself that the old house was in his way, his way being anywhere, he tried to look upon his passing it once more as a matter of imperative and disagreeable necessity, quite apart from any desire of his own, to which he could not choose but yield. It is not uncommon for people who are much better fed and taught than Christopher Nubbles had ever been, to make duties of their inclinations in matters of more doubtful propriety, and to take great credit for the self-denial with which they gratify themselves.

There was no need of any caution this time, and no fear of being detained by having to play out a return match with Daniel Quilp's boy. The place was entirely deserted, and looked as dusty and dingy as if it had been so for months. A rusty padlock was fastened on the door, ends of discoloured blinds and curtains flapped drearily against the half-opened upper windows, and the crooked holes cut in the closed shutters below, were black with the darkness of the inside. Some of the glass in the window he had so often watched, had been broken in the rough hurry of the morning, and that room looked more deserted and dull than any. A group of idle urchins had taken possession of the door-steps: some were plying the knocker and listening with delighted dread to the hollow sounds it spread through the dismantled house; others were clustered about the keyhole, watching half in jest and half in earnest for "the ghost," which an hour's gloom, added to the mystery that hung about the late inhabitants, had already raised. Standing all alone in the midst of the business and bustle of the street, the house looked a picture of cold desolation; and Kit, who remembered the cheerful fire that used to burn there on a winter's night, and

the no less cheerful laugh that made the small room ring, turned quite mournfully away.

It must be specially observed in justice to poor Kit, that he was by no means of a sentimental turn, and perhaps had never heard that adjective in all his life. He was only a soft-hearted grateful fellow, and had nothing genteel or polite about him; consequently instead of going home again in his grief to kick the children and abuse his mother (for when your finely strung people are out of sorts, they must have everybody else unhappy likewise), he turned his thoughts to the vulgar expedient of making them more comfortable if he could.

Bless us, what a number of gentlemen on horseback there were riding up and down, and how few of them wanted their horses held! A good city speculator or a parliamentary commissioner could have told to a fraction, from the crowds that were cantering about, what sum of money was realised in London, in the course of a year, by holding horses alone. And undoubtedly it would have been a very large one, if only a twentieth part of the gentlemen without grooms had had occasion to alight; but they hadn't; and it is often an ill-natured circumstance like this, which spoils the most ingenious estimate in the world.

Kit walked about, now with quick steps and now with slow; now lingering as some rider slackened his horse's pace and looked about him; and now darting at full speed up a bye street, as he caught a glimpse of some distant horseman going lazily up the shady side of the road, and promising to stop, at every door. But on they all went, one after another, and there was not a penny stirring. "I wonder," thought the boy, "if one of these gentlemen knew there was nothing in the cupboard at home, whether he'd stop on purpose, and make believe that he wanted to call somewhere, that I might earn a trifle!"

He was quite tired out with pacing the streets, to say nothing of repeated disappointments, and was sitting down upon a step to rest, when there approached towards him a little clattering jingling four-wheeled chaise, drawn by a little obstinate-looking rough-coated pony, and driven by a little fat placid-faced old gentleman. Beside the little old gentleman sat a little old lady, plump and placid like himself, and the pony was coming along at his own pace and doing exactly as he pleased with the whole concern. If the old gentleman remonstrated by shaking the reins, the pony replied by shaking his head. It was plain that the utmost the pony would consent to do, was to go in his own way up any street that the old gentleman particularly wished to traverse, but that it was an understanding between them that he must do this after his own fashion or not at all.

As they passed where he sat, Kit looked so wistfully at the little turn-out, that the old gentleman looked at him, and Kit rising and putting his hand to his hat, the old gentleman intimated to the pony that he wished to stop, to which proposal the pony (who seldom objected to that part of his duty) graciously acceded.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kit. "I'm sorry you stopped, sir. I only meant did you want your horse minded."

"I'm going to get down in the next street," returned the old gentleman. "If you like to come on after us, you may have the job."

Kit thanked him, and joyfully obeyed. The pony ran off at a sharp angle to inspect a lamp-post on the opposite side of the way, and then went off at a tangent to another lamp-post on the other side. Having satisfied himself that they were of the same pattern and materials, he came to a stop, apparently absorbed in meditation.

"Will you go on, sir," said the old gentleman, gravely, "or are we to wait here for you till it's too late for our appointment?"

The pony remained immoveable.

"Oh you naughty whisker," said the old lady. "Fie upon you! I am ashamed of such conduct."

The pony appeared to be touched by this appeal to his feelings, for he trotted on directly, though in a sulky manner, and stopped no more until he came to a door whereon was a brass plate with the words "Witherden—Notary." Here the old gentleman got out and helped out the old lady, and then took from under the seat a nosegay, resembling in shape and dimensions a full-sized warming-pan with the handle cut short off. This, the old lady carried into the house with a staid and stately air, and the old gentleman (who had a club foot) followed close upon her.

They went, as it was easy to tell from the sound of their voices, into the front parlour, which seemed to be a kind of office. The day being very warm and the street a quiet one, the windows were wide open, and it was easy to hear through the Venetian blinds all that passed inside.

At first there was great shaking of hands and shuffling of feet, succeeded by the presentation of the nosegay; for a voice, supposed by the listener to be that of Mr. Witherden the notary, was heard to exclaim a great many times, "oh, delicious!"

"oh, fragrant indeed!" and a nose, also supposed to be the property of that gentleman, was heard to inhale the scent with a snuffle of exceeding pleasure.

"I brought it in honour of the occasion, sir," said the old lady.

"Ah! an occasion indeed, ma'am; an occasion which does honour to me, ma'am, honour to me," rejoined Mr. Witherden the notary. "I have had many a gentleman articled to me, ma'am, many a one. Some of them are now rolling in riches unmindful of their old companion and friend, ma'am, others are in the habit of calling upon me to this day and saying, 'Mr. Witherden, some of the pleasantest hours I ever spent in my life were spent in this office—were spent, sir, upon this very stool;' but there was never one among the number, ma'am, attached as I have been to many of them, of whom I augured such bright things as I do of your only son."

"Oh dear!" said the old lady. "How happy you do make us when you tell us that, to be sure!"

"I tell you, ma'am," said Mr. Witherden, "what I think as an honest man, which, as the poet observes, is the noblest work of God. I agree with the poet in every particular, ma'am. The mountainous Alps on the one hand, or a humming-bird on the other, is nothing, in point of workmanship, to an honest man—or woman—or woman."

"Anything that Mr. Witherden can say of me," observed a small quiet voice, "I can say with interest of him, I am sure."

"It's a happy circumstance, a truly happy circumstance," said the notary, "to happen too upon his eight-and-twentieth birth-day, and I hope I know how to appreciate it. I trust, Mr. Garland, my dear sir, that we may mutually congratulate each other upon this auspicious occasion."

To this the old gentleman replied that he felt assured they might. There appeared to be another shaking of hands in consequence, and when it was over, the old gentleman said that though he said it who should not, he believed no son had ever been a greater comfort to his parents than Abel Garland had been to his.

"Marrying as his mother and I did, late in life, sir, after waiting for a great many years until we were well enough off—coming together when we were no longer young, and then blessed with one child who has always been dutiful and affectionate—why, it's a source of great happiness to us both, sir."

"Of course it is, I have no doubt of it," returned the notary, in a sympathising voice. "It's the contemplation of this sort of thing, that makes me deplore my fate in being a bachelor. There was a young lady once, sir, the daughter of an outfitting warehouse of the first respectability—but that's a weakness—Chuckster, being in Mr. Abel's articles."

"You see, Mr. Witherden," said the old lady, "that Abel has not been brought up like the run of young men. He has always had a pleasure in our society, and always been with us. Abel has never been absent from us, for a day, has he my dear?"

"Never, my dear," returned the old gentleman, "except when he went to Margate one Saturday with Mr. Tomkinley that had been a teacher at that school he went to, and came back upon the Monday; but he was very ill after that you remember, my dear; it was quite a dissipation."

"He was not used to it, you know," said the old lady, "and he couldn't bear it, that's the truth. Besides he had no comfort in being there without us, and had nobody to talk to or enjoy himself with."

"That was it you know," interposed the same small quiet voice that had spoken once before. "I was quite abroad, mother, quite desolate, and to think that the sea was between us—oh I never shall forget what I felt when I first thought that the sea was between us!"

"Very natural under the circumstances," observed the notary. "Mr. Abel's feelings did credit to his nature, and credit to your nature ma'am, and his father's nature, and human nature. I trace the same current now, flowing through all his quiet and unobtrusive proceedings.—I am about to sign my name, you observe, at the foot of the articles which Mr. Chuckster will witness; and, placing my finger upon this blue wafer with the vandyked corners, I am constrained to remark in a distinct tone of voice—don't be alarmed ma'am, it is merely a form of law—that I deliver this, as my act and deed. Mr. Abel will place his name against the other wafer, repeating the same cabalistic words, and the business is over. Ha, ha ha! You see how easily these things are done!"

There was a short silence, apparently while Mr. Abel went through the prescribed form, and then the shaking of hands and shuffling of feet were renewed, and shortly afterwards there was a clinking of wine-glasses and a great talkativeness on the part of every body. In about a quarter of an hour Mr. Chuckster (with a pen behind his ear and his face inflamed with wine) appeared at the door, and condescending to address Kit by the jocose appellation of "Young Snob," informed him that the visitors were coming out.

Out they came forthwith; Mr. Witherden, who was short, chubby, fresh-coloured, brisk, and pompous, leading the old lady

with extreme politeness, and the father and son following them, arm in arm. Mr. Abel, who had a quaint old-fashioned air about him, looked nearly of the same age as his father, and bore a wonderful resemblance to him in face and figure, though wanting something of his full, round, cheerfulness, and substituting in its place a timid reserve. In all other respects, in the neatness of the dress, and even in the club-foot, he and the old gentleman were precisely alike.

Having seen the old lady safely in her seat, and assisted in the arrangement of her cloak and a small basket which formed an indispensable portion of her equipage, Mr. Abel got into a little box behind which had evidently been made for his express accommodation, and smiled at every body present by turns, beginning with his mother and ending with the pony. There was then a great to-do to make the pony hold up his head that the bearing-rein might be fastened; at last even this was effected; and the old gentleman, taking his seat and the reins, put his hand in his pocket to find a sixpence for Kit.

He had no sixpences, neither had the old lady, nor Mr. Abel, nor the notary, nor Mr. Chuckster. The old gentleman thought a shilling too much, but there was no shop in the street to get change at, so he gave it to the boy.

"There," he said jokingly, "I'm coming here again next Monday at the same time, and mind you're here my lad to work it out."

"Thank you, sir," said Kit. "I'll be sure to be here."

He was quite serious, but they all laughed heartily at his saying so, especially Mr. Chuckster, who roared outright and appeared to relish the joke amazingly. As the pony, with a presentiment that he was going home, or a determination that he would not go anywhere else (which was the same thing) trotted away pretty nimbly, Kit had no time to justify himself, and went his way also. Having expended his treasure in such purchases as he knew would be most acceptable at home, not forgetting some seed for the wonderful bird, he hastened back as fast as he could, so elated with his success and great good-fortune, that he more than half expected Nell and the old man would have arrived before him.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

Often, while they were yet pacing the silent streets of the town on the morning of their departure, the child trembled with a mingled sensation of hope and fear as in some far-off figure imperfectly seen in the clear distance, her fancy traced a likeness to honest Kit. But although she would gladly have given him her hand and thanked him for what he had said at their last meeting, it was always a relief to find, when they came nearer to each other, that the person who approached was not he, but a stranger; for even if she had not dreaded the effect which the sight of him might have wrought upon her fellow-traveller, she felt that to bid farewell to anybody now, and most of all to him who had been so faithful and so true, was more than she could bear. It was enough to leave dumb things behind, and objects that were insensible both to her love and sorrow. To have parted from her only other friend upon the threshold of that wild journey, would have wrung her heart indeed.

Why is it that we can better bear to part in spirit than in body, and while we have the fortitude to act farewell have not the nerve to say it? On the eve of long voyages or an absence of many years, friends who are tenderly attached will separate with the usual look, the usual pressure of the hand, planning one final interview for the morrow, while each well knows that it is but a poor feint to save the pain of uttering that one word, and that the meeting will never be. Should possibilities be worse to bear than certainties? We do not shun our dying friends; the not having distinctly taken leave of one among them, whom we left in all kindness and affection, will often embitter the whole remainder of a life.

The town was glad with morning light; places that had shown ugly and distrustful all night long, now wore a smile; and sparkling sunbeams dancing on chamber windows, and twinkling through blind and curtain before sleepers' eyes, shed light even into dreams, and chased away the shadows of the night. Birds in hot rooms, covered up close and dark, felt it was morning, and chafed and grew restless in their little cells; bright-eyed mice crept back to their tiny homes and nestled timidly together; the sleek house-cat, forgetful of her prey, sat winking at the rays of sun starting through key-hole and cranny in the door and longed for her stealthy run and warm sleek bask outside. The nobler beasts confined in dens stood motionless behind their bars, and gazed on fluttering boughs and sunshine peeping through some little window, with eyes in which old forests gleamed—then trod impatiently the track their prisoned feet had worn—and stopped and gazed again. Men in their dungeons stretched their cramped cold limbs and cursed the stone that no bright sky could warm. The flowers that sleep by night, opened their gentle eyes and turned them to the day. The light, creation's mind, was everywhere, and all things owned its power.

The two pilgrims, often pressing each other's hands, or exchanging a smile or cheerful look, pursued their way in silence. Bright and happy as it was, there was something solemn in the long, deserted streets, from which like bodies without souls all habitual character and expression had departed, leaving but one dead uniform repose, that made them all alike. All was so still at that early hour, that the few pale people whom they met seemed as much unsuited to the scene, as the sickly lamp which had been here and there left burning was powerless and faint in the full glory of the sun.

Before they had penetrated very far into the labyrinth of men's abodes which yet lay between them and the outskirts, this aspect began to melt away, and noise and bustle to usurp its place. Some straggling carts and coaches rumbling by, first broke the charm, then others came, then others yet more active, then a crowd. The wonder was at first to see a tradesman's window open, but it was a rare thing soon to see one closed; then smoke rose slowly from the chimneys, and sashes were thrown up to let in air, and doors were opened, and servant girls, looking lazily in all directions but their brooms, scattered brown clouds of dust into the eyes of shrinking passengers, or listened disconsolately to milkmen who spoke of country fairs, and told of wagons in the mews, with awnings and all things complete and gallant swains to boot, which another hour would see upon their journey.

This quarter passed, they came upon the haunts of commerce and great traffic, where many people were resorting, and business was already rife. The old man looked about him with a startled and bewildered gaze, for these were places that

he hoped to shun. He pressed his finger on his lip, and drew the child along by narrow courts and winding ways, nor did he seem at ease until they had left it far behind, often casting a backward look towards it, murmuring that ruin and self-murder were crouching in every street, and would follow if they scented them; and that they could not fly too fast.

Again this quarter passed, they came upon a straggling neighbourhood, where the mean houses parcelled off in rooms, and windows patched with rags and paper, told of the populous poverty that sheltered there. The shops sold goods that only poverty could buy, and sellers and buyers were pinched and griped alike. Here were poor streets where faded gentility essayed with scanty space and shipwrecked means to make its last feeble stand, but tax-gatherer and creditor came there as elsewhere, and the poverty that yet faintly struggled was hardly less squalid and manifest than that which had long ago submitted and given up the game.

This was a wide, wide track — for the humble followers of the camp of wealth pitch their tents round about it for many a mile—but its character was still the same. Damp rotten houses, many to let, many yet building, many half built and mouldering away — lodgings, where it would be hard to tell which needed pity most, those who let or those who came to take — children, scantily fed and clothed, spread over every street, and sprawling in the dust—scolding mothers, stamping their slipshod feet with noisy threats upon the pavement —shabby fathers, hurrying with dispirited looks to the occupation which brought them "daily bread" and little more—mangling-women, washer-women, cobblers, tailors, chandlers, driving their trades in parlours and kitchens and back rooms and garrets, and sometimes all of them under the same roof — brick-fields, skirting gardens paled with staves of old casks, or timber pillaged from houses burnt down and blackened and blistered by the flames — mounds of dock-weed, nettles, coarse grass and oyster-shells, heaped in rank confusion — small dissenting chapels to teach, with no lack of illustration, the miseries of Earth, and plenty of new churches, erected with a little superfluous wealth, to show the way to Heaven.

At length these streets, becoming more straggling yet, dwindled and dwindled away until there were only small garden patches bordering the road, with many a summer-house innocent of paint, and built of old timber or some fragments of a boat, green as the tough cabbage-stalks that grew about it, and grottoed at the seams with toad-stools and tight-sticking snails. To these succeeded pert cottages, two and two, with plots of ground in front, laid out in angular beds with stiff box borders and narrow paths between, where footstep never strayed to make the gravel rough. Then came the public-house, freshly painted in green and white, with tea-gardens and a bowling-green, spurning its old neighbour with the horse-trough where the wagons stopped; then fields; and then some houses, one by one, of goodly size with lawns, some even with a lodge where dwelt a porter and his wife. Then came a turnpike; then fields again with trees and haystacks; then a hill; and on the top of that the traveller might stop, and—looking back at old Saint Paul's looming through the smoke, its cross peeping above the cloud (if the day were clear) and glittering in the sun; and casting his eyes upon the Babel out of which it grew until he traced it down to the furthest outposts of the invading army of bricks and mortar, whose station lay for the present nearly at his feet —might feel at last that he was clear of London.

Near such a spot as this, and in a pleasant field, the old man and his little guide (if guide she were, who knew not whither they were bound) sat down to rest. She had had the precaution to furnish her basket with some slices of bread and meat, and here they made their frugal breakfast.

The freshness of the day, the singing of the birds, the beauty of the waving grass, the deep green leaves, the wild flowers, and the thousand exquisite scents and sounds that floated in the air,—deep joys to most of us, but most of all to those whose life is in a crowd, or who live solitary in great cities as in the bucket of a human well,—sank into their breasts and made them very glad. The child had repeated her artless prayers once that morning, more earnestly perhaps than she had ever done in all her life, but as she felt all this, they rose to her lips again. The old man took off his hat —he had no memory for the words—but he said amen, and they were very good.

There had been an old copy of the Pilgrim's Progress, with strange plates, upon a shelf at home, over which she had often pored whole evenings, wondering whether it was true in every word, and where those distant countries with the curious names might be. As she looked back upon the place they had left, one part of it came strongly on her mind.

"Dear grandfather," she said, "only that this place is prettier and a great deal better than the real one, if that in the book is

ike it, I teel as if we were both Christian, and laid down on this grass all the cares and troubles we brought with us; never to take them up again."

"No—never to return—never to return," —replied the old man, waving his hand toward the city. "Thou and I are free of it now, Nell. They shall never lure us back."

"Are you tired?" said the child, "are you sure you don't feel ill from this long walk?"

"I shall never feel ill again, now that we are once away," was his reply. "Let us be stirring, Nell. We must be further away—a long, long way further. We are too near to stop, and be at rest. Come!"

There was a pool of clear water in the field, in which the child laved her hands and face, and cooled her feet before setting forth to walk again. She would have the old man refresh himself in this way too, and making him sit down upon the grass, cast the water on him with her hands, and dried it with her simple dress.

"I can do nothing for myself, my darling," said the grandfather. "I don't know how it is I could once, but the time's gone. Don't leave me, Nell, say that thou 'lt not leave me. I loved thee all the while, indeed I did. If I lose thee too, my dear, I must die!"

He laid his head upon her shoulder, and moaned piteously. The time had been, and a very few days before, when the child could not have restrained her tears, and must have wept with him. But now she soothed him with gentle and tender words, smiled at his thinking they could ever part, and rallied him cheerfully upon the jest. He was soon calmed and fell asleep, singing to himself in a low voice, like a little child.

He awoke refreshed, and they continued their journey. The road was pleasant, lying between beautiful pastures and fields of corn, above which, poised high in the clear blue sky, the lark trilled out her happy song. The air came laden with the fragrance it caught upon its way, and the bees, upborne upon its scented breath, hummed forth their drowsy satisfaction as they floated by.

They were now in the open country, the houses were very few, and scattered at long intervals, often miles apart. Occasion-

ally they came upon a cluster of poor cottages, some with a chair or low board put across the open door to keep the scrambling children from the road, others shut up close while all the family were working in the fields. These were often the commencement of a little village: and after an interval came a wheelwright's shed, or perhaps a blacksmith's forge; then a thriving farm, with sleepy cows lying about the yard, and horses peering over the low wall and scampering away when harnessed horses passed upon the road, as though in triumph at their freedom. There, were dull pigs, too, turning up the ground in search of dainty food, and grunting their monotonous grumblings as they prowled about, or crossed each other in their quest; plump pigeons skimming round the roof or strutting on the eaves; and ducks and geese, far more graceful in their conceit, waddling awkwardly about the edges of the pond or sailing glibly on its surface. The farmyard passed, then came the little inn; the humbler beer-shop; and the village tradesman's; then the lawyer's and the parson's at whose dread names the beer-shop trembled; the church then peeped out modestly from a clump of trees; then there were a few more cottages; then the cage, and pound, and not unfrequently, on a bank by the way-side, a deep old dusty well. Then came the trim-hedged fields on either hand, and the open roads again.

They walked all day, and slept that night at a small cottage where beds were let to travellers. Next morning they were afoot again, and though jaded at first, and very tired, recovered before long and proceeded briskly forward.

They often stopped to rest, but only for a short space at a time, and still kept on, having had but slight refreshment since the morning. It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon, when, drawing near another cluster of labourers' huts, the child looked wistfully in each, doubtful at which to ask for permission to rest awhile, and buy a draught of milk.

It was not easy to determine, for she was timid and fearful of being repulsed. Here was a crying child, and there a noisy wife. In this, the people seemed too poor; in that, too many. At length she stopped at one where the family were seated round a table—chiefly because there was an old man sitting in a cushioned chair beside the hearth, and she thought he was a grandfather and would feel for hers.

There were besides, the cottager and his wife, and three young sturdy children, brown as berries. The request was no sooner preferred, than granted. The eldest boy ran to fetch some milk, the second dragged two stools towards the door, and the youngest crept to his mother's gown, and looked at the strangers from beneath his sunburnt hand.

"God save you, master," said the old cottager, in a thin piping voice, "are you travelling far?"

"Yes, sir, a long way,"—replied the child; for her grandfather appealed to her.

"From London?" enquired the old man.

The child said yes.

Ah! he had been in London many a time—used to go there often, once, with wagons. It was nigh two-and-thirty year since he had been there last, and he did hear say there were great changes. Like enough! He had changed, himself, since then. Two-and-thirty year was a long time, and eighty-four a great age, though there was some he had known that had lived to very hard upon a hundred—and not so hearty as he, neither—no, nothing like it.

"Sit thee down, master, in the elbow-chair," said the old man, knocking his stick upon the brick floor, and trying to do so, sharply. "Take a pinch out o' that box; I don't take much myself, for it comes dear, but I find it wakes me up sometimes, and yet ye're but a boy to me. I should have a son pretty nigh as old as you if he'd lived, but they listed him for a so'ger—he come back home, though, for all he had but one poor leg. He always said he'd be buried near the sun-dial he used to climb upon when he was a baby, did my poor boy, and his words come true—you can see the place with your own eyes; we've kept the turf up, ever since."

He shook his head, and looking at his daughter with watery eyes, said she needn't be afraid that he was going to talk about that any more. He didn't wish to trouble nobody, and if he had troubled anybody by what he said, he asked pardon, that was all.

The milk arrived, and the child producing her little basket and selecting its best fragments for her grandfather, they made a hearty meal. The furniture of the room was very homely, of course—a few rough chairs and a table, a corner cupboard with their little stock of crockery and delf, a gaudy tea-tray, representing a lady in bright red, walking out with a very blue parasol, a few common-coloured scripture subjects in frames upon the wall and chimney, an old dwarf clothes-press and an eight-day clock, with a few bright saucepans and a kettle, comprised the whole. But every thing was clean and neat, and as the child glanced round, she felt a tranquil air of comfort and content to which she had long been unaccustomed.

"How far is it to any town or village?" she asked of the husband.

"A matter of good five mile, my dear," was the reply; "but you're not going on to-night?"

"Yes, yes, Nell," said the old man hastily, urging her too by signs. "Further on, further on, darling, further away if we walk till midnight."

"There's a good barn hard by, master," said the man, "or there's travellers' lodgings, I know, at the Plow an' Harrer. Excuse me, but you do seem a little tired, and unless you're very anxious to get on —"

"Yes, yes, we are," returned the old man fretfully. "Further away, dear Nell, pray further away."

"We must go on, indeed," said the child, yielding to his restless wish. "We thank you very much, but we cannot stop so soon. I'm quite ready, grandfather."

But the woman had observed, from the young wanderer's gait, that one of her little feet was blistered and sore, and being a woman and a mother too, she would not suffer her to go until she had washed the place and applied some simple remedy, which she did so carefully and with such a gentle hand — rough-grained and hard though it was, with work—that the child's heart was too full to admit of her saying more than a fervent "God bless you!" nor could she look back nor trust herself to speak, until they had left the cottage some distance behind. When she turned her head, she saw that the whole family, even the old grandfather, were standing in the road watching them as they went; and so, with many waves of the hand, and cheering nods, and on one side at least not without tears, they parted company.

They trudged forward, more slowly and painfully than they had done yet, for another mile or thereabouts, when they heard the sound of wheels behind them, and looking round observed an empty cart approaching pretty briskly. The driver on coming up to them stopped his horse and looked earnestly at Nell.

"Didn't you stop to rest at a cottage yonder?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the child.

"Ah! they asked me to look out for you," said the man. "I'm going your way. Give me your hand — jump up, master."

This was a great relief, for they were very much fatigued and could scarcely crawl along. To them the jolting cart was a luxurious carriage, and the ride the most delicious in the world. Nell had scarcely settled herself on a little heap of straw in one corner, when she fell asleep, for the first time that day.

She was awakened by the stopping of the cart, which was about to turn up a bye lane. The driver kindly got down to help her out, and pointing to some trees at a very short distance before them, said that the town lay there, and that they had better take the path which they would see, leading through the church-yard. Accordingly, towards this spot they directed their weary steps.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

The sun was setting when they reached the wicket-gate at which the path began, and, as the rain falls upon the just and unjust alike, it shed its warm tint even upon the resting places of the dead, and bade them be of good hope for its rising on the morrow. The church was old and grey, with ivy clinging to the walls, and round the porch. Shunning the tombs, it crept about the mounds, beneath which slept poor humble men, twining for them the first wreaths they had ever won, but wreaths less liable to wither and far more lasting in their kind, than some which were graven deep in stone and marble, and told in pompous terms of virtues meekly hidden for many a year, and only revealed at last to executors and mourning legatees.

The clergyman's horse, stumbling with a dull blunt sound among the graves, was cropping the grass; at once deriving orthodox consolation from the dead parishioners, and enforcing last Sunday's text that this was what all flesh came to; a lean ass who had sought to expound it also, without being qualified and ordained, was pricking his ears in an empty pound hard by, and looking with hungry eyes upon his priestly neighbour.

The old man and the child quitted the gravel path and strayed among the tombs, for there the ground was soft, and easy to their tired feet. As they passed behind the church, they heard voices near at hand, and presently came on those who had spoken.

They were two men who were seated in

easy attitudes upon the grass, and so busily engaged as to be at first unconscious of intruders. It was not difficult to divine that they were of a class of itinerant showmen—exhibiters of the freaks of Punch—for, perched cross-legged upon a tombstone behind them, was the figure of that hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual. Perhaps his imperturbable character was never more strikingly developed, for he preserved his usual equable smile notwithstanding that his body was dangling in a most uncomfortable position, all loose and limp and shapeless, while his long peaked cap, unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs, threatened every instant to bring him toppling down.

In part scattered upon the ground at the feet of the two men, and in part jumbled together in a long flat box, were the other persons of the Drama. The hero's wife and one child, the hobby-horse, the doctor, the foreign gentleman who not being familiar with the language is unable in the representation to express his ideas otherwise than by the utterance of the word "Shallabalah" three distinct times, the radical neighbour who will by no means admit that a tin bell is an organ, the executioner, and the devil, were all here. Their owners had evidently come to that spot to make some needful repairs in the stage arrangements; for one of them was engaged in binding together a small gallows with thread, while the other was intent upon fixing a new black wig, with the aid of a small hammer and some tacks, upon the head of the radical neighbour, who had been beaten bald.

They raised their eyes when the old man and his young companion were close upon them, and pausing in their work, returned their looks of curiosity. One of them, the actual exhibiter no doubt, was a little merry-faced man, with a twinkling eye and a red nose, who seemed to have unconsciously imbibed something of his hero's character. The other—that was he who took the money—had rather a careful and cautious look, which was perhaps inseparable from his occupation also.

The merry man was the first to greet the strangers with a nod; and following

the old man's eyes, he observed that perhaps that was the first time he had ever seen a Punch off the stage. (Punch, it may be remarked, seemed to be pointing with the tip of his cap to a most flourishing epitaph, and to be chuckling over it with all his heart.)

"Why do you come here to do this?" said the old man, sitting down beside them, and looking at the figures with extreme delight.

"Why you see," rejoined the little man, "we 're putting up for to-night at the public-house yonder, and it wouldn't do to let 'em see the present company undergoing repair."

"No!" cried the old man, making signs to Nell to listen, "why not, eh? why not!"

"Because it would destroy all the delusion, and take away all the interest, wouldn't it?" replied the little man. "Would you care a ha'penny for the Lord Chancellor if you know'd him in private and without his wig? certainly not."

"Good!" said the old man, venturing to touch one of the puppets, and drawing away his hand with a shrill laugh. "Are you going to show 'em to-night? are you?"

"That is the intention, governor," replied the other; "and unless I 'm much mistaken Tommy Codlin is a calculating at this minute what we 've lost through your coming upon us. Cheer up, Tommy, it can't be much."

The little man accompanied these latter words with a wink, expressive of the estimate he had formed of the traveller's finances.

To this Mr. Codlin, who had a surly, grumbling manner, replied, as he twitched Punch off the tombstone and flung him into the box,

"I don't care if we haven't lost a farden, but you 're too free. If you stood in front of the curtain and see the public's faces as I do, you 'd know human natur' better."

"Ah! it 's been the spoiling of you, Tommy, your taking to that branch," rejoined his companion. "When you played the ghost in the reg'lar drama in the fairs, you believed in everything—except ghosts. But now you 're a universal mistruster. *I* never see a man so changed."

"Never mind," said Mr. Codlin, with the air of a discontented philosopher. "I know better now, and p'raps I 'm sorry for it."

Turning over the figures in the box like one who knew and despised them, Mr. Codlin drew one forth and held it up for the inspection of his friend.

"Look here; here 's all this Judy's clothes falling to pieces again. You haven't got a needle and thread, I suppose?"

The little man shook his head, and scratched it ruefully as he contemplated this severe indisposition of a principal performer. Seeing that they were at a loss, the child said timidly:

"I have a needle, sir, in my basket, and thread too. Will you let me try to mend it for you? I think I can do it neater than you could."

Even Mr. Codlin had nothing to urge against a proposal so seasonable. Nelly, kneeling down beside the box, was soon busily engaged in her task, and accomplishing it to a miracle.

While she was thus engaged, the merry little man looked at her with an interest which did not appear to be diminished when he glanced at her helpless companion. When she had finished her work he thanked her, and inquired whither they were travelling.

"N—no further to-night, I think," said the child, looking towards her grandfather.

"If you 're wanting a place to stop at," the man remarked, "I should advise you to take up at the same house with us. That 's it — the long, low, white house there. It 's very cheap."

The old man, notwithstanding his fatigue, would have remained in the churchyard all night if his new acquaintance had staid there too. As he yielded to this suggestion a ready and rapturous assent, they all rose and walked away together; he keeping close to the box of puppets in which he was quite absorbed, the merry little man carrying it slung over his arm by a strap attached to it for the purpose, Nelly having hold of her grandfather's hand, and Mr. Codlin sauntering slowly behind, casting up at the church tower and neighbouring trees such looks as he was accustomed in town practice to direct to drawing-room and nursery windows, when seeking for a profitable spot on which to plant the show.

The public-house was kept by a fat old landlord and landlady who made no objection to receiving their new guests, but praised Nelly's beauty and were at once prepossessed in her behalf. There was no other company in the kitchen but the two showmen, and the child felt very thankful that they had fallen upon such good quarters. The landlady was very much astonished to learn that they had come all the way from London, and appeared to have no little curiosity touching their farther destination. The child parried her inquiries as well as she could, and with no great trouble for finding that they appeared to give her pain, the old lady desisted.

"These two gentlemen have ordered supper in an hour's time," she said, taking her into the bar; "and your best plan will be to sup with them. Meantime you shall have a little taste of something that'll do you good, for I'm sure you must want it after all you've gone through to-day. Now, don't look after the old gentleman, because when you've drank that, he shall have some too."

As nothing could induce the child to leave him alone, however, or to touch anything in which he was not the first and greatest sharer, the old lady was obliged to help him first. When they had been thus refreshed, the whole house hurried away into an empty stable where the show stood, and where, by the light of a few flaring candles stuck round a hoop which hung by a line from the ceiling, it was to be forthwith exhibited.

And now Mr. Thomas Codlin, the misanthrope, after blowing away at the Pan's pipes until he was intensely wretched, took his station on one side of the checked drapery which concealed the mover of the figures, and putting his hands in his pockets prepared to reply to all questions and remarks of Punch, and to make a dismal feint of being his most intimate private friend, of believing in him to the fullest and most unlimited extent, of knowing that he enjoyed day and night a merry and glorious existence in that temple, and that he was at all times and under every circumstance the same intelligent and joyful person that the spectators then beheld him. All this Mr. Codlin did with the air of a man who had made up his mind for the worst and was quite resigned; his eye slowly wandering about during the briskest repartee to observe the effect upon the audience, and particularly the impression made upon the landlord and landlady, which might be productive of very important results in connexion with the supper.

Upon this head, however, he had no cause for any anxiety, for the whole performance was applauded to the echo, and voluntary contributions were showered in with a liberality which testified yet more strongly to the general delight. Among the laughter none was more loud and frequent than the old man's. Nell's was unheard, for she, poor child, with her head drooping on his shoulder, had fallen asleep, and slept too soundly to be roused by any of his efforts to awaken her to a participation in his glee.

The supper was very good, but she was too tired to eat, and yet would not leave the old man until she had kissed him in his bed. He, happily insensible to every care and anxiety, sat listening with a vacant smile and admiring face to all that his new friends said; and it was not until they retired yawning to their room, that he followed the child up stairs.

It was but a loft partitioned into two compartments, where they were to rest, but they were well pleased with their lodging and had hoped for none so good. The old man was uneasy when he had lain down, and begged that Nell would come and sit at his bedside as she had done for so many nights. She hastened to him, and sat there till he slept.

There was a little window, hardly more than a chink in the wall, in her room, and when she left him, she opened it, quite wondering at the silence. The sight of the old church and the graves about it in the moonlight, and the dark trees whispering among themselves, made her more thoughtful than before. She closed the window again, and sitting down upon the bed, thought of the life that was before them.

She had a little money, but it was very little, and when that was gone, they must begin to beg. There was one piece of gold among it, and an emergency might come when its worth to them would be increased a hundred fold. It would be best to hide this coin, and never produce it unless their case was absolutely desperate, and no other resource was left them.

Her resolution taken, she sewed the piece of gold into her dress, and going to bed with a lighter heart sunk into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

Another bright day shining in through the small casement, and claiming fellowship with the kindred eyes of the child, awoke her. At sight of the strange room and its unaccustomed objects, she started up in alarm, wondering how she had been moved from the familiar chamber in which she seemed to have fallen asleep last night, and whither she had been conveyed. But another glance around called to her mind all that had lately passed, and she sprang from her bed hoping and trustful.

It was yet early, and the old man being still asleep, she walked out into the churchyard brushing the dew from the long grass with her feet, and often turning aside into places where it grew longer than in others, that she might not tread upon the graves. She felt a curious kind of pleasure in lingering among these houses of the dead, and read the inscriptions on the tombs of the good people (a great number of good people were buried there), passing on from one to another with increasing interest.

It was a very quiet place, as such a place should be, save for the cawing of the rooks who had built their nests among the branches of some tall old trees, and were calling to one another, high up in air. First one sleek bird hovering near his ragged house as it swung and dangled in the wind, uttered his hoarse cry, quite by chance as it would seem, and in a sober tone as though he were but talking to himself. Another answered, and he called again, but louder than before, then another spoke and then another, and each time the first, aggravated by contradiction, insisted on his case more strongly. Other voices, silent till now, struck in from boughs lower down and higher up and midway, and to the right and left, and from the tree-tops, and others arriving hastily from the grey church turrets and old belfry window, joined the clamour which rose and fell and swelled and dropped again, and still went on; and all this noisy contention amidst a skimming to and fro, and lighting on fresh branches and frequent change of place, which satirised the old restlessness of those who lay so still beneath the moss and turf below, and the useless strife in which they had worn away their lives.

Frequently raising her eyes to the trees whence these sounds came down, and feeling as though they made the place more quiet than perfect silence would have done, the child loitered from grave to grave, now stopping to replace with careful hands the bramble which had started from some green mound it helped to keep in shape, and now peeping through one of the low latticed windows into the church, with its worm-eaten books upon the desks, and baize of whitened-green mouldering from the pew sides and leaving the naked wood to view. There were the seats where the poor old people sat, worn spare, and yellow like themselves, the rugged font where children had their names, the homely altar where they knelt in after life, the plain black tressels that bore their weight on their last visit to the cool old shady church. Everything told of long use and quiet slow decay; the very bell-rope in the porch was frayed into a fringe, and hoary with old age.

She was looking at a humble stone which told of a young man who had died at twenty-three years old, fifty-five years ago, when she heard a faltering step approaching, and looking round saw a feeble woman bent with the weight of years, who tottered to the foot of that same grave and asked her to read the writing on the stone. The old woman thanked her when she had done, saying that she had had the words by heart for many a long, long year, but could not see them now.

"Were you his mother?" said the child.

"I was his wife, my dear."

She the wife of a young man of three-and-twenty! Ah, true! It was fifty-five years ago.

"You wonder to hear me say that," remarked the old woman, shaking her head. "You're not the first, older folk than you have wondered at the same thing before now. Yes, I was his wife. Death doesn't change us more than life, my dear."

"Do you come here often?" asked the child.

"I sit here very often in the summer time," she answered; "I used to come here once to cry and mourn, but that was a weary while ago, bless God!"

"I pluck the daisies as they grow, and take them home," said the old woman after a short silence. "I like no flowers so well as these, and haven't for five-and-fifty year. It's a long time, and I'm getting very old!"

Then growing garrulous upon a theme which was new to one listener though it were but a child, she told her how she had wept and moaned and prayed to die herself, when this happened, and how when she first came to that place, a young creature strong in love and grief, she had hoped that her heart was breaking as it seemed to be. But that time passed by, and although she continued to be sad when she came there, still she could bear to come, and so went on until it was pain no longer, but a solemn pleasure, and a duty she had learnt to like. And now that five-and-fifty years were gone, she spoke of the dead man as if he had been her son or grandson, with a kind of pity for his youth, growing out of her own old age, and an exalting of his strength and manly beauty as compared with her own weakness and decay; and yet she spoke about him as her husband too, and thinking of herself in connexion with him, as she used to be, and not as she was now, talked of their meeting in another world as if he were dead but yesterday, and she, separated from her former self, were thinking of the happiness of that comely girl who seemed to have died with him.

The child left her gathering the flowers that grew upon the grave, and thoughtfully retraced her steps.

The old man was by this time up and dressed. Mr. Codlin, still doomed to contemplate the harsh realities of existence, was packing among his linen the candle-ends which had been saved from the previous night's performance, while his companion received the compliments of all the loungers in the stable-yard, who, unable to separate him from the master-mind of Punch, set him down as next in importance to that merry outlaw, and loved him scarcely less. When he had sufficiently acknowledged his popularity he came in to breakfast, at which meal they all sat down together.

"And where are you going to-day?" said the little man, addressing himself to Nell.

"Indeed I hardly know, we have not determined yet," replied the child.

"We're going on to the races," said the little man. "If that's your way and you like to have us for company, let us travel together. If you prefer going alone, only say the word and you'll find that we shan't trouble you."

"We'll go with you," said the old man. "Nell,—with them, with them."

The child considered for a moment, and reflecting that she must shortly beg, and could scarcely hope to do so at a better place than where crowds of rich ladies and gentlemen were assembled together for purposes of enjoyment and festivity, determined to accompany these men so far. She therefore thanked the little man for his offer, and said, glancing timidly towards his friend, that if there was no objection to their accompanying them as far as the race town—

"Objection!" said the little man. "Now be gracious for once, Tommy, and say that you'd rather they went with us. I know you would. Be gracious, Tommy."

"Trotters," said Mr. Codlin, who talked very slowly and eat very greedily, as is not uncommon with philosophers and misanthropes; "you're too free."

"Why, what harm can it do?" urged the other.

"No harm at all in this particular case, perhaps," replied Mr. Codlin, "but the principle's a dangerous one, and you're too free I tell you."

"Well, are they to go with us or not?"

"Yes, they are," said Mr. Codlin; "but you might have made a favour of it, mightn't you?"

The real name of the little man was Harris, but it had gradually merged into the less euphonious one of Trotters, which with the prefatory adjective Short, had been conferred upon him by reason of the small size of his legs. Short Trotters, however, being a compound name, and inconvenient of use in friendly dialogue, the gentleman on whom it had been bestowed was known among his intimates either as "Short," or "Trotters," and was seldom accosted at full length as Short Trotters, except in formal conversations and on occasions of ceremony.

Short, then, or Trotters as the reader pleases, returned unto the remonstrance of his friend Mr. Thomas Codlin a jocose answer calculated to turn aside his discontent, and applying himself with great relish to the cold boiled beef, the tea and bread and butter, strongly impressed upon his companions that they should do the like. Mr. Codlin indeed required no such persuasion, as he had already eat as much as he could possibly carry and was now moistening his clay with strong ale, whereof he took deep draughts with a silent relish and invited nobody to partake, thus again strongly indicating his misanthropical turn of mind.

Breakfast being at length over, Mr. Codlin called the bill, and charging the ale to the company generally (a practice also savouring of misanthropy) divided the sum-total into two fair and equal parts, assigning one moiety to himself and friend, and the other to Nelly and her grandfather.

These being duly discharged and all things ready for their departure, they took farewell of the landlord and landlady and resumed their journey.

And here Mr. Codlin's false position in society and the effect it wrought upon his wounded spirit, were strongly illustrated, for whereas he had been last night accosted by Mr. Punch as "master" and had by inference left the audience to understand that he maintained that individual for his own luxurious entertainment and delight, here he was, now, painfully walking beneath the burden of that same Punch's temple, and bearing it bodily upon his shoulders on a sultry day and along a dusty road. In place of enlivening his patron with a constant fire of wit or the cheerful rattle of his quarter-staff on the heads of his relations and acquaintance, here was that beaming Punch utterly devoid of spine, all slack and drooping in a dark box, with his legs doubled up round his neck, and not one of his social qualities remaining.

Mr. Codlin trudged heavily on, exchanging a word or two at intervals with Short, and stopping to rest and growl occasionally. Short led the way, with the flat box, the private luggage (which was not extensive) tied up in a bundle, and a brazen trumpet slung from his shoulder-blade. Nell and her grandfather walked next him on either hand, and Thomas Codlin brought up the rear.

When they came to any town or village or even to a detached house of good appearance, Short blew a blast upon the brazen trumpet and carolled a fragment of a song in that hilarious tone common to Punches and their consorts. If people hurried to the windows, Mr. Codlin pitched the temple, and hastily unfurling the drapery and concealing Short therewith, flourished hysterically on the Pipes and performed an air. Then the entertainment began as soon as might be, Mr. Codlin having the responsibility of deciding on its length and of protracting or expediting the time for the hero's final triumph over the enemy of mankind, according as he judged that the after-crop of half-pence would be plentiful or scant. When it had been gathered in to the last farthing, he resumed his load and on they went again.

Sometimes they played out the toll across a bridge or ferry, and once exhibited by particular desire at a turnpike where the collector, being drunk in his solitude, paid down a shilling to have it to himself. There was one small place of rich promise in which their hopes were blighted, for a favourite character in the play having gold-lace upon his coat and being a meddling wooden-headed fellow was held to be a libel on the beadle, for which reason the authorities enforced a quick retreat; but they were generally well received, and seldom left a town without a troop of ragged children shouting at their heels.

They made a long day's journey, despite these interruptions, and were yet upon the road when the moon was shining in the sky. Short beguiled the time with songs and jests—and made the best of everything that happened. Mr. Codlin on the other hand, cursed his fate, and all the hollow things of earth (but Punch especially) and limped along with the theatre on his back, a prey to the bitterest chagrin.

They had stopped to rest beneath a finger-post where four roads met, and Mr. Codlin in his deep misanthropy had let down the drapery and seated himself in the bottom of the show, invisible to mortal eyes and disdainful of the company of his fellow-creatures, when two monstrous shadows were seen stalking towards them from a turning in the road by which they had come. The child was at first quite terrified by the sight of these gaunt giants—for such they looked as they advanced with lofty strides beneath the shadow of the trees — but Short telling her there was nothing to fear blew a blast upon the trumpet, which was answered by a cheerful shout.

"It's Grinder's lot, an't it?" cried Short in a loud key.

"Yes," replied a couple of shrill voices.

"Come on then," said Short. "Let's have a look at you. I thought it was you."

Thus invited, "Grinder's lot" approached with redoubled speed and soon came up with the little party. Mr. Grinder's company, familiarly termed a lot, consisted of a young gentleman and a young lady on stilts, and Mr. Grinder himself who used his natural legs for pedestrian purposes and carried at his back a drum. The public costume of the young people was of the Highland kind, but the night being damp and cold, the young gentleman wore over his kilt a man's pea-jacket reaching to his ankles, and a glazed hat; the young lady too was muffled in an old cloth pelisse and had a handkerchief tied about her head. Their Scotch bonnets ornamented with plumes of jet black feathers, Mr. Grinder carried on his instrument.

"Bound for the races, I see," said Mr. Grinder coming up out of breath. "So are we. How are you, Short?" With that they shook hands in a very friendly manner. The young people being too high up for the ordinary salutations, saluted Short after their own fashion. The young gentleman twisted up his right stilt and patted him on

the shoulder, and the young lady rattled her tambourine.

"Practice!" said Short, pointing to the stilts.

"No," returned Grinder. "It comes either to walkin' on 'em or carryin' of 'em, and they like walkin' in 'em best. It's wery pleasant for the prospects. Which road are you takin'? We go the nighest."

"Why, the fact is," said Short, "that we were going the longest way, because then we could stop for the night, a mile and a half on. But three or four mile gained to-night is so many saved to-morrow, and if you keep on, I think our best way is to do the same."

"Where's your partner?" inquired Grinder.

"Here he is," cried Mr. Thomas Codlin, presenting his head and face in the proscenium ot the stage, and exhibiting an expression of countenance not often seen there; "and he'll see *his* partner boiled alive before he'll go on to-night. That's what *he* says."

"Well, don't say such things as them, in a spear which is dewoted to something pleasanter," urged Short. "Respect associations Tommy, even if you do cut up rough."

"Rough or smooth," said Mr. Thomas Codlin beating his hand on the little footboard, where Punch when suddenly struck with the symmetry of his legs and their capacity for silk stockings, is accustomed to exhibit them to popular admiration, "rough or smooth, I won't go further than the mile and a half to-night. I put up at the Jolly Sandboys and nowhere else. If you like to come there, come there. If you like to go on by yourself, go on by yourself, and do without me if you can."

So saying, Mr. Codlin disappeared from the scene and immediately presenting himself outside the theatre, took it on his shoulders at a jerk, and made off with most remarkable agility.

Any further controversy being now out of the question, Short was fain to part with Mr. Grinder and his pupils and to follow his morose companion. After lingering at the finger-post for a few minutes to see the

stilts frisking away in the moonlight and the bearer of the drum toiling slowly after them, he blew a few notes upon the trumpet as a parting salute, and hastened with all speed to follow Mr. Codlin. With this view he gave his unoccupied hand to Nell and bidding her be of good cheer as they would soon be at the end of their journey for that night, and stimulating the old man with a similar assurance, led them at a pretty swift pace towards their destination, which he was the less unwilling to make for, as the moon was now overcast and the clouds were threatening rain.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

The Jolly Sandboys was a small road-side inn of pretty ancient date, with a sign representing three Sandboys increasing their jollity with as many jugs of ale and bags of gold, creaking and swinging on its post on the opposite side of the road. As the travellers had observed that day many indications of their drawing nearer and nearer to the race town, such as gipsy camps, carts laden with gambling booths and their appurtenances, itinerant showmen of various kinds, and beggars and trampers of every degree, all wending their way in the same direction, Mr. Codlin was fearful of finding the accommodations forestalled; this fear increasing as he diminished the distance between himself and the hostelry, he quickened his pace, and notwithstanding the burden he had to carry, maintained a round trot until he reached the threshold. Here he had the gratification of finding that his fears were without foundation, for the landlord was leaning against the door-post looking lazily at the rain, which had by this time begun to descend heavily, and no tinkling of cracked bell, nor boisterous shout, nor noisy chorus, gave note of company within.

"All alone?" said Mr. Codlin, putting down his burden and wiping his forehead

"All alone as yet," rejoined the landlord, glancing at the sky, "but we shall have more company to-night I expect. Here one of you boys, carry that show into the barn. Make haste in out of the wet, Tom; when it came on to rain I told 'em to make the fire up, and there's a glorious blaze in the kitchen I can tell you."

Mr. Codlin followed with a willing mind, and soon found that the landlord had not commended his preparations without good reason. A mighty fire was blazing on the hearth and roaring up the wide chimney with a cheerful sound, which a large iron cauldron bubbling and simmering in the heat lent its pleasant aid to swell. There was a deep red ruddy blush upon the room, and when the landlord stirred the fire sending the flames skipping and leaping up, when he took off the lid of the iron pot and there rushed out a savoury smell, while the bubbling sound grew deeper and more rich, and an unctuous stream came floating out, hanging in a delicious mist above their heads — when he did this, Mr. Codlin's heart was touched. He sat down in the chimney-corner and smiled.

Mr. Codlin sat smiling in the chimney-corner, eyeing the landlord as with a roguish look he held the cover in his hand, and feigning that his doing so was needful to the welfare of the cookery, suffered the delightful steam to tickle the nostrils of his guest. The glow of the fire was upon the landlord's bald head and upon his twinkling eye and upon his watering mouth and upon his pimpled face, and upon his round fat figure. Mr. Codlin drew his sleeve across his lips, and said in a murmuring voice, "what is it!"

"It's a stew of tripe," said the landlord smacking his lips, "and cow-heel," smacking them again, "and bacon," smacking them once more, "and steak," smacking them for the third time, "and peas, cauliflowers, new potatoes, and sparrow-grass, all working up together in one delicious gravy." Having come to the climax, he smacked his lips a great many times, and taking a long hearty sniff of the fragrance that was hovering about, put on the cover again with the air of one whose toils on earth were over.

"At what time will it be ready?" asked Mr. Codlin faintly.

"It'll be done to a turn," said the landlord looking up at the clock—and the very clock had a colour in its fat white face and looked a clock for Jolly Sandboys to consult —"it'll be done to a turn at twenty-two minutes before eleven."

"Then," said Mr. Codlin, "fetch me a pint of warm ale, and don't let anybody bring into the room even so much as a biscuit till the time arrives."

Nodding his approval of this decisive and manly course of procedure, the landlord retired to draw the beer, and presently returning with it, applied himself to warm the same in a small tin vessel shaped funnel-wise, for the convenience of sticking it far down in the fire and getting at the bright places. This was soon done, and he handed it over to Mr. Codlin with that creamy froth upon the surface which is one of the happy circumstances attendant upon mulled malt.

Greatly softened by this soothing beverage, Mr. Codlin now bethought him of his companions, and acquainted mine host of the Sandboys that their arrival might be shortly looked for. The rain was rattling against the windows and pouring down in torrents, and such was Mr. Codlin's extreme amiability of mind, that he more than once expressed his earnest hope that they would not be so foolish as to get wet.

At length they arrived, drenched with the rain and presenting a most miserable appearance, notwithstanding that Short had sheltered the child as well as he could under the skirts of his own coat, and they were nearly breathless from the haste they had made. But their steps were no sooner heard upon the road than the landlord, who had been at the outer door anxiously watching for their coming, rushed into the kitchen and took the cover off. The effect was electrical. They all came in with smiling faces though the wet was dripping from their clothes upon the floor, and Short's first remark was, "what a delicious smell!"

It is not very difficult to forget rain and mud by the side of a cheerful fire, and in a bright room. They were furnished with slippers and such dry garments as the house or their own bundles afforded, and ensconcing themselves as Mr. Codlin had already done, in the warm chimney-corner, soon forgot their late troubles, or only remembered them as enhancing the delights of the present time. Overpowered by the warmth and comfort and the fatigue they had undergone, Nelly and the old man had not long taken their seats here, when they fell asleep.

"Who are they?" whispered the landlord.

Short shook his head, and wished he knew himself.

"Don't *you* know?" asked the host, turning to Mr. Codlin.

"Not I," he replied. "They're no good I suppose."

"They're no harm," said Short. "Depend upon that. I tell you what—it's plain that the old man an't in his right mind—"

"If you haven't got anything newer than that to say," growled Codlin, glancing at the clock, "you'd better let us fix our minds upon the supper, and not disturb us."

"Hear me out, won't you?" retorted his friend. "It's very plain to me, besides, that they're not used to this way of life. Don't tell me that that handsome child has been in the habit of prowling about as she's done these last two or three days. I know better."

"Well, who *does* tell you she has?" growled Mr. Codlin, again glancing at the clock and from it to the cauldron, "can't you think of anything more suitable to present circumstances than saying things and then contradicting 'em?"

"I wish somebody would give you your supper," returned Short, "for there'll be no peace till you've got it. Have you seen how anxious the old man is to get on — always wanting to be furder away — furder away? Have you seen that?"

"Ah! what then?" muttered Thomas Codlin.

"This, then," said Short. "He has given his friends the slip. Mind what I say, he has given his friends the slip, and persuaded this delicate young creetur all along of her fondness for him to be his guide and travelling companion — where to, he knows no more than the man in the moon. Now I'm not a going to stand that."

"You're not a going to stand that!" cried Mr. Codlin glancing at the clock again and pulling his hair with both hands in a kind of frenzy, but whether occasioned by his companion's observation or the tardy pace of Time, it was difficult to determine. "Here's a world to live in!"

"I," repeated Short emphatically and slowly, "am not a-going to stand it. I am not a-going to see this fair young child a falling into bad-hands, and getting among people that she's no more fit for, than they are to get among angels as their ordinary chums. Therefore when they dewelope an intention of parting company from us, I shall take measures for detaining of 'em, and restoring 'em to their friends, who I dare say have had their disconsolation pasted up on every wall in London by this time."

"Short," said Mr. Codlin, who with his head upon his hands and his elbows on his knees had been shaking himself impatiently from side to side, up to this point and occasionally stamping on the ground, but who now looked up with eager eyes; "it's possible that there may be uncommon good sense in what you've said. If there is, and there should be a reward, Short, remember that we're partners in everything!"

His companion had only time to nod a brief assent to this position, for the child awoke at the instant. They had drawn close together during the previous whispering, and now hastily separated and were rather awkwardly endeavouring to exchange some casual remarks in their usual tone, when strange footsteps were heard without, and fresh company entered.

These were no other than four very dismal dogs, who came pattering in one after the other, headed by an old bandy dog of particularly mournful aspect, who stopping when the last of his followers had got as far as the door, erected himself upon his hind legs and looked round at his companions who immediately stood upon their hind legs, in a grave and melancholy row. Nor was this the only remarkable circumstance about these dogs, for each of them wore a kind of little coat of some gaudy colour trimmed with tarnished spangles, and one of them had a cap upon his head, tied very carefully under his chin, which had fallen down upon his nose and completely obscured one eye; add to this, that the gaudy coats were all wet through and discoloured with rain, and that the wearers were splashed and dirty, and some idea may be formed of the unusual appearance of these new visiters to the Jolly Sandboys.

Neither Short nor the landlord nor Thomas Codlin, were the least surprised, merely remarking that these were Jerry's dogs and that Jerry could not be far behind. So there the dogs stood, patiently winking and gaping and looking extremely hard at the boiling pot, until Jerry himself appeared, when they all dropped down at once and walked about the room in their natural manner. This posture it must be confessed did not much improve their appearance, as their own personal tails and their coat tails —both capital things in their way—did not agree together.

Jerry, the manager of these dancing dogs, was a tall black-whiskered man in a velveteen coat, who seemed well known to the landlord and his guests and accosted them with great cordiality. Disencumbering himself of a barrel-organ which he placed upon a chair, and retaining in his hand a small whip wherewith to awe his company of comedians, he came up to the fire to dry himself, and entered into conversation.

"Some people don't usually travel in character, do they?" said Short, pointing

to the dresses of the dogs. "It must come expensive if they do."

"No," replied Jerry, "no, its not the custom with us. But we've been playing a little on the road to-day, and we come out with a new wardrobe at the races, so didn't think it worth while to stop to undress. Down, Pedro!"

This was addressed to the dog with the cap on, who being a new member of the company and not quite certain of his duty, kept his unobscured eye anxiously on his master, and was perpetually starting upon his hind legs when there was no occasion, and falling down again.

"I've got a animal here," said Jerry, putting his hand into the capacious pocket of his coat, and diving into one corner as if he were feeling for a small orange or an apple or such article, "a animal here, wot I think you know something of, Short."

"Ah!" cried Short, "let's have a look at him."

"Here he is," said Jerry, producing a little terrier from his pocket. "He was a Toby of yours, warn't he?"

In some versions of the great drama of Punch there is a small dog — a modern innovation — supposed to be the private property of that gentleman, whose name is always Toby. This Toby has been stolen in youth from another gentleman, and fraudulently sold to the confiding hero who having no guile himself has no suspicion that it lurks in others; but Toby entertaining a grateful recollection of his old master and scorning to attach himself to any new patrons, not only refuses to smoke a pipe at the bidding of Punch, but to mark his old fidelity more strongly, seizes him by the nose and wrings the same with violence, at which instance of canine attachment the spectators are deeply affected. This was the character which the little terrier in question had once sustained; if there had been any doubt upon the subject he would speedily have resolved it by his conduct, for not only did he, on seeing Short, give the strongest tokens of recognition, but catching sight of the flat-box he barked so furiously at the pasteboard nose which he knew was inside, that his master was obliged to gather him up and put him into his pocket again, to the great relief of the whole company.

The landlord now busied himself in laying the cloth, in which process Mr. Codlin obligingly assisted, by setting forth his own knife and fork in the most convenient place and establishing himself behind them. When everything was ready, the landlord took off the cover for the last time, and then indeed there burst forth such a goodly promise of supper, that if he had offered to put it on again or had hinted a postponement, he would certainly have been sacrificed on his own hearth.

However, he did nothing of the kind, but instead thereof assisted a stout servant girl in turning the contents of the cauldron into a large tureen; a proceeding which the dogs, proof against various hot splashes which fell upon their noses, watched with terrible eagerness. At length the dish was lifted on the table and mugs of ale having been previously set round, little Nell ventured to say grace and supper began.

At this juncture the poor dogs were standing on their hind legs quite surprisingly; the child, having pity on them, was about to cast some morsels of food to them before she tasted it herself, hungry though she was, when their master interposed.

"No my dear, no, not an atom from anybody's hand but mine if you please. That dog," said Jerry, pointing out the old leader of the troop, and speaking in a terrible voice, "lost a halfpenny to-day. *He* goes without his supper."

The unfortunate creature dropped upon his fore-legs directly, wagged his tail, and looked imploringly at his master.

"You must be more careful Sir," said Jerry, walking coolly to the chair where he had placed the organ, and setting the stop. "Come here. Now Sir, you play away at that, while we have supper, and leave off if you dare."

The dog immediately began to grind most mournful music. His master having showed him the whip resumed his seat and called up the others who, at his directions, formed in a row, standing upright as a file of soldiers.

"Now gentlemen," said Jerry, looking at them attentively. "The dog whose name's called, eats. The dogs whose names arn't called, keep quiet. Carlo!"

The lucky individual whose name was called snapped up the morsel thrown towards him, but none of the others moved a muscle. In this manner they were fed at the discretion of their master. Meanwhile the dog in disgrace ground hard at the organ, sometimes in quick time, sometimes in slow, but never leaving off for an instant.

When the knives and forks rattled very much, or any of his fellows got an unusually large piece of fat, he accompanied the music with a short howl, but he immediately checked it on his master looking round, and applied himself with increased diligence to the Old Hundredth.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

SUPPER was not yet over, when there arrived at the Jolly Sandboys two more travellers bound for the same haven as the rest, who had been walking in the rain for some hours, and came in shining and heavy with water. One of these was the proprietor of a giant, and a little lady without legs or arms, who had jogged forward in a van; the other, a silent gentleman who earned his living by showing tricks upon the cards, and who had rather deranged the natural expression of his countenance by putting small leaden lozenges into his eyes and bringing them out at his mouth, which was one of his professional accomplishments. The name of the first of these new-comers was Vuffin; the other, probably as a pleasant satire upon his ugliness, was called Sweet William. To render them as comfortable as he could, the landlord bestirred himself nimbly, and in a very short time both gentlemen were perfectly at their ease.

"How's the Giant?" said Short, when they all sat smoking round the fire.

"Rather weak upon his legs," returned Mr. Vuffin. "I begin to be afraid he's going at the knees."

"That's a bad look-out," said Short.

"Ay! bad indeed," replied Mr. Vuffin, contemplating the fire with a sigh. "Once get a giant shaky on his legs, and the public care no more about him than they do for a dead cabbage-stalk."

"What becomes of the old giants?" said Short, turning to him again after a little reflection.

"They're usually kept in carawans to wait upon the dwarfs," said Mr. Vuffin.

"The maintaining of 'em must come expensive, when they can't be shown, eh?" remarked Short, eyeing him doubtfully.

"It's better that, than letting 'em go upon the parish or about the streets," said Mr. Vuffin. "Once make a giant common, and giants will never draw again. Look at wooden legs. If there was only one man with a wooden leg what a property *he*'d be!"

"So he would!" observed the landlord and Short both together. "That's very true."

"Instead of which," pursued Mr. Vuffin, "if you was to advertise Shakspeare played entirely by wooden legs, it's my belief you wouldn't draw a sixpence."

"I don't suppose you would," said Short. And the landlord said so too.

"This shows, you see," said Mr. Vuffin, waving his pipe with an argumentative air, "this shows the policy of keeping the used-up giants still in the carawans, where they get food and lodging for nothing, all their lives, and in general very glad they are to stop there. There was one giant—a black 'un—as left his carawan some years ago and took to carrying coach-bills about London, making himself as cheap as crossing-sweepers. He died, I make no insinuation against anybody in particular," said Mr. Vuffin, looking solemnly round, "but he was ruining the trade;—and he died."

The landlord drew his breath hard, and looked at the owner of the dogs, who nodded and said gruffly that *he* remembered.

"I know you do, Jerry," said Mr. Vuffin, with profound meaning. "I know you remember it, Jerry, and the universal opinion was, that it served him right. Why, I remember the time when old Maunders as had three-and-twenty wans — I remember the time when old Maunders had in his cottage in Spa Fields in the winter time when the season was over, eight male and female dwarfs setting down to dinner every day, who was waited on by eight old giants in green coats, red smalls, blue cotton stockings, and high-lows: and there was one dwarf as had grown elderly and wicious, who, whenever his giant wasn't quick enough to please him, used to stick pins in his legs, not being able to reach up any higher. I know that's a fact, for Maunders told it me himself."

"What about the dwarfs, when *they* get old?" inquired the landlord.

"The older a dwarf is, the better worth he is," returned Mr. Vuffin; "a grey-headed dwarf, well wrinkled, is beyond all suspicion. But a giant weak in the legs and not standing upright! — keep him in the carawan, but never show him, never show him, for any persuasion that can be offered."

While Mr. Vuffin and his two friends smoked their pipes and beguiled the time with such conversation as this, the silent gentleman sat in a warm corner swallowing, or seeming to swallow, sixpennyworth of halfpence for practice, balancing a feather upon his nose, and rehearsing other feats of dexterity of that kind, without paying any regard whatever to the company, who in their turn left him utterly unnoticed. At length the weary child prevailed upon her grandfather to retire, and they withdrew, leaving the company yet seated round the fire, and the dogs fast asleep at a humble distance.

After bidding the old man good night, Nell retired to her poor garret, but had scarcely closed the door, when it was gently tapped at. She opened it directly, and was a little startled by the sight of Mr. Thomas Codlin, whom she had left, to all appearance, fast asleep down stairs.

"What's the matter?" said the child.

"Nothing's the matter, my dear," returned her visiter. "I'm your friend. — Perhaps you haven't thought so, but it's me that's your friend—not him."

"Not who?" the child inquired.

"Short, my dear. I tell you what," said Codlin, "for all his having a kind of way with him that you'd be very apt to like, I'm the real, open-hearted man. I mayn't look it, but I am indeed."

The child began to be alarmed, considering that the ale had taken effect upon Mr. Codlin, and that this commendation of him self was the consequence.

"Short's very well and seems kind," resumed the misanthrope, "but he overdoes it. Now I don't."

Certainly, if there were any fault in Mr. Codlin's usual deportment, it was that he rather underdid his kindness to those about him, than overdid it. But the child was puzzled and could not tell what to say.

"Take my advice," said Codlin; "don't ask me why, but take it. As long as you travel with us, keep as near me as you can. Don't offer to leave us—not on any account—but always stick to me and say that I'm your friend. Will you bear that in mind, my dear, and always say that it was me that was your friend?"

"Say so where,—and when?" inquired the child, innocently.

"Oh, nowhere in particular," replied Codlin, a little put out as it seemed by the question; "I'm only anxious you should think me so, and do me justice. You can't think what an interest I have in you.—Why didn't you tell me your little history—that about you and the poor old gentleman? I'm the best adviser that ever was, and *so* interested in you—so much more interested than Short. I think they're breaking up down stairs; you needn't tell Short, you know, that we've had this little talk together. God bless you. Recollect the friend. Codlin's the friend, not Short.—Short's very well as far as he goes, but the real friend is Codlin—not Short."

Eking out these professions with a number of benevolent and protecting looks and great fervour of manner, Thomas Codlin stole away on tiptoe, leaving the child in a state of extreme surprise. She was still

ruminating upon his curious behaviour, when the floor of the crazy stairs and landing cracked beneath the tread of the other travellers who were passing to their beds. When they had all passed, and the sound of their footsteps had died away, one of them returned, and after a little hesitation and rustling in the passage, as if he were doubtful what door to knock at, knocked at hers.

"Yes?" said the child, from within.

"It's me—Short," a voice called through the keyhole. "I only wanted to say that we must be off early to-morrow morning, my dear, because unless we get the start of the dogs and the conjurer, the villages won't be worth a penny. You'll be sure to be stirring early and go with us? I'll call you."

The child answered in the affirmative, and returning his "good night," heard him creep away. She felt some uneasiness at the anxiety of these men, increased by the recollection of their whispering together down stairs and their slight confusion when she awoke, nor was she quite free from a misgiving that they were not the fittest companions she could have stumbled on. Her uneasiness, however, was nothing, weighed against her fatigue; and she soon forgot it in sleep.

Very early next morning Short fulfilled his promise, and knocking softly at her door entreated that she would get up directly, as the proprietor of the dogs was still snoring, and if they lost no time they might get a good deal in advance both of him and the conjurer, who was talking in his sleep, and from what he could be heard to say, appeared to be balancing a donkey in his dreams. She started from her bed without delay, and roused the old man with so much expedition that they were both ready as soon as Short himself, to that gentleman's unspeakable gratification and relief.

After a very unceremonious and scrambling breakfast of which the staple commodities were bacon and bread, and beer, they took leave of the landlord and issued from the door of the Jolly Sandboys.—The morning was fine and warm, the ground cool to the feet after the late rain, the hedges gayer and more green, the air clear, and everything fresh and healthful. Surrounded by these influences, they walked on pleasantly enough.

They had not gone very far, when the child was again struck by the altered behaviour of Mr Thomas Codlin, who, instead of plodding on sulkily by himself as he had theretofore done, kept close to her, and when he had an opportunity of looking at her unseen by his companion, warned her by certain wry faces and jerks of the head not to put any trust in Short, but to reserve all confidences for Codlin. Neither did he confine himself to looks and gestures, for when she and her grandfather were walking on beside the aforesaid Short, and that little man was talking with his accustomed cheerfulness on a variety of indifferent subjects, Thomas Codlin testified his jealousy and distrust by following close at her heels, and occasionally admonishing her ancles with the legs of the theatre in a very abrupt and painful manner.

All these proceedings naturally made the child more watchful and suspicious, and she soon observed that whenever they halted to perform outside a village alehouse or other place, Mr. Codlin, while he went through his share of the entertainments, kept his eye steadily upon her and the old man, or with a show of great friendship and consideration invited the latter to lean upon his arm, and so held him tight until the representation was over and they again went forward. Even Short seemed to change in this respect, and to mingle with his good-nature something of a desire to keep them in safe custody. This increased the child's misgivings, and made her yet more anxious and uneasy.

Meanwhile, they were drawing near the town where the races were to begin the next day; for, from passing numerous groups of gipsies and trampers on the road, wending their way towards it, and straggling out from every by-way and cross-country lane, they gradually fell into a stream of people, some walking by the side of covered carts, others with horses, others with donkeys, others toiling on with heavy loads upon their backs, but all tending to the same point. The public-houses by the way-side, from being empty and noiseless as those in the remoter parts had been, now sent out boisterous shouts and clouds of smoke, and from the misty windows, clusters of broad red faces looked down upon the road. On every piece of waste or common ground, some small gambler drove his noisy trade and bellowed to the idle passers-by to stop and try their chance; the crowd grew thicker and more noisy; gilt gingerbread in blanket-stalls exposed its glories to the dust; and often a four-horse carriage dashing by, obscured all objects in the gritty cloud it raised, and left them, stunned and blinded, far behind.

It was dark before they reached the town itself, and long indeed the few last miles had been. Here all was tumult and confusion; the streets were filled with throngs of people—many strangers there, it seemed, by the looks they cast about, the church-bells rang out their noisy peals, and flags streamed from windows and house

tops. In the large inn-yards, waiters flitted to and fro and ran against each other, horses clattered on the uneven stones, carriage-steps fell rattling down, and sickening smells from many dinners came in a heavy lukewarm breath upon the scene. In the smaller public-houses, fiddles with all their might and main were squeaking out the tune to staggering feet; drunken men, oblivious of the burden of their song, joined in a senseless howl, which drowned the twinkling of the feeble bell, and made them savage for their drink; vagabond groups assembled round the doors to see the stroller woman dance, and add their uproar to the shrill flageolet and deafening drum.

Through this delirious scene, the child, frightened and repelled by all she saw, led on her bewildered charge, clinging close to her conductor, and trembling lest in the press she should be separated from him and left to find her way alone. Quickening their steps to get clear of all the roar and riot, they at length passed through the town and made for the race-course, which was upon an open heath, situated on an eminence a full mile distant from its furthest bounds.

Although there were many people here, none of the best favoured or best clad, busily erecting tents and driving stakes into the ground, and hurrying to and fro with dusty feet and many a grumbled oath—although there were tired children cradled on heaps of straw between the wheels of carts, crying themselves to sleep—and poor lean horses and donkeys just turned loose, grazing among the men and women, and pots and kettles, and half-lighted fires, and ends of candles flaring and wasting in the air—for all this, the child felt it an escape from the town, and drew her breath more freely. After a scanty supper, the purchase of which reduced her little stock so low, that she had only a few halfpence with which to buy a breakfast on the morrow, she and the old man lay down to rest in the corner of a tent, and slept, despite the busy preparations that were going on around them all night long.

And now they had come to the time when they must beg their bread. Soon after sunrise in the morning she stole out from the tent, and rambling into some fields at a short distance, plucked a few wild roses and such humble flowers, purposing to make them into little nosegays and offer them to the ladies in the carriages when the company arrived. Her thoughts were not idle while she was thus employed; when she returned and was seated beside the old man in one corner of the tent, tying her flowers together, while the two men lay dozing in another corner, she plucked him by the sleeve, and slightly glancing towards them, said in a low voice

"Grandfather, don't look at those I talk of, and don't seem as if I spoke of any-

thing but what I am about. What was that you told me before we left the old house? That if they knew what we were going to do, they would say that you were mad, and part us?"

The old man turned to her with an aspect of wild terror; but she checked him by a look, and bidding him hold some flowers while she tied them up, and so bringing her lips closer to his ear, said,

"I know that was what you told me. You needn't speak, dear. I recollect it very well. It was not likely that I should forget it. Grandfather, these men suspect that we have secretly left our friends, and mean to carry us before some gentleman and have us taken care of and sent back. If you let your hand tremble so, we can never get away from them, but if you're only quiet now, we shall do so, easily."

"How?" muttered the old man. "Dear Nelly, how? They will shut me up in a stone room, dark and cold, and chain me up to the wall, Nell—flog me with whips, and never let me see thee more!"

"You're trembling again," said the child. "Keep close to me all day. Never mind them, don't look at them, but me. I shall find a time when we can steal away. When I do, mind you come with me, and do not stop or speak a word. Hush! That's all."

"Halloa! what are you up to, my dear?" said Mr. Codlin, raising his head, and yawning. Then observing that his companion was fast asleep, he added in an earnest whisper, "Codlin's the friend, remember—not Short."

"Making some nosegays," the child replied; "I am going to try and sell some these three days of the races. Will you have one—as a present I mean?"

Mr. Codlin would have risen to receive it, but the child hurried towards him and placed it in his hand. He stuck it in his button-hole with an air of ineffable complacency for a misanthrope, and leering exultingly at the unconscious Short, muttered, as he laid himself down again, "Tom Codlin's the friend, by G—!"

As the morning wore on, the tents assumed a gayer and more brilliant appearance, and long lines of carriages came rolling softly on the turf. Men who had lounged about all night in smock-frocks and leather leggings, came out in silken vests and hats and plumes, as jugglers or mountebanks; or in gorgeous liveries as soft-spoken servants at gambling booths; or in sturdy yeoman dress as decoys at unlawful games. Black-eyed gipsy girls, hooded in showy handkerchiefs, sallied forth to tell fortunes, and pale slender women with consumptive faces lingered upon the footsteps of ventriloquists and conjurers, and counted the sixpences with anxious eyes long before they were gained. As many of the children as could be kept within bounds, were stowed away, with all the other signs of dirt and poverty, among the donkeys, carts, and horses; and as many as could not be thus disposed of ran in and out in all intricate spots, crept between people's legs and carriage-wheels, and came forth unharmed from under horses' hoofs. The dancing-dogs, the stilts, the little lady and the tall man, and all the other attractions, with organs out of number and bands innumerable, emerged from the holes and corners in which they had passed the night, and flourished boldly in the sun.

Along the uncleared course, Short led his party, sounding the brazen trumpet and revelling in the voice of Punch; and at his heels went Thomas Codlin, bearing the show as usual, and keeping his eye on Nelly and her grandfather, as they rather lingered in the rear. The child bore upon the arm the little basket with her flowers, and sometimes stopped with timid and modest looks, to offer them at some gay carriage; but, alas! there were many bolder beggars there, gipsies who promised husbands, and other adepts in their trade, and although some ladies smiled gently as they shook their heads, and others cried to the gentlemen beside them "see, what a pretty face!" they left the pretty face pass on, and never thought that it looked tired or hungry.

There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage, while two young men in dashing clothes, who had just dismounted from it, talked and laughed loudly at a little distance, appearing to forget her, quite. There were many ladies all around, but they turned their backs, or looked another way, or at the two young men (not unfavourably at *them*), and left her to herself. She motioned away a gipsy-woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already and had been for some years, but called the child towards her, and, taking her flowers, put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and keep at home for God's sake.

Many a time they went up and down those long long lines, seeing everything but the horses and the race; when the bell rung to clear the course, going back to rest among the carts and donkeys, and not coming out again until the heat was over. Many a time, too, was Punch displayed in the full zenith of his humour, but all this while the eye of Thomas Codlin was upon them, and to escape without notice was impracticable.

At length, late in the day, Mr. Codlin pitched the show in a convenient spot, and the spectators were soon in the very triumph of the scene. The child, sitting down with the old man close behind it, had been thinking how strange it was that horses, who were such fine honest creatures, should seem to make vagabonds of all the men they drew about them, when a loud laugh at some extemporaneous witticism of Mr. Short's, having allusion to the circumstances of the day, roused her from her meditation and caused her to look around.

If they were ever to get away unseen, that was the very moment. Short was plying the quarter-staves vigorously and knocking the characters in the fury of the combat, against the sides of the show, the people were looking on with laughing faces, and Mr. Codlin had relaxed into a grim smile as his roving eye detected hands going into waistcoat pockets and groping secretly for sixpences. If they were ever to get away unseen, that was the very moment. They seized it, and fled.

They made a path through booths and carriages, and throngs of people, and never once stopped to look behind. The bell was ringing and the course was cleared by the time they reached the ropes, but they dashed across it, insensible to the shouts and screeching that assailed them for breaking in upon its sanctity, and, creeping under the brow of the hill at a quick pace, made for the open fields.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

Day after day as he bent his steps homeward, returning from some new effort to procure employment, Kit raised his eyes to the window of the little room he had so much commended to the child, and hoped to see some indication of her presence. His own earnest wish, coupled with the assurance he had received from Quilp, filled him with the belief that she would yet arrive to claim the humble shelter he had offered, and from the death of each day's hope, another hope sprung up to live to-morrow.

"I think they must certainly come to-morrow, eh, mother?" said Kit, laying aside his hat with a weary air and sighing as he spoke. "They have been gone a week. They surely couldn't stop away more than a week, could they now?"

The mother shook her head, and reminded him how often he had been disappointed already.

"For the matter of that," said Kit, "you speak true and sensible enough, as you always do, mother. Still, I do consider that a week is quite long enough for 'em to be rambling about; don't you say so?"

"Quite long enough, Kit, longer than enough, but they may not come back for all that."

Kit was for a moment disposed to be vexed by this contradiction, and not the less so from having anticipated it in his own mind and knowing how just it was. But the impulse was only momentary, and the vexed look became a kind one before it had crossed the room.

"Then what do you think, mother, has become of 'em? You don't think they 've gone to sea, anyhow?"

"Not gone for sailors, certainly," returned the mother, with a smile. "But I can't help thinking that they have gone to some foreign country."

"I say," cried Kit, with a rueful face, "don't talk like that, mother."

"I am afraid they have, and that 's the truth," she said. "It 's the talk of all the neighbours, and there are some even that know of their having been seen on board ship, and can tell you the name of the place they 've gone to, which is more than I can, my dear, for it 's a very hard one."

"I don't believe it," said Kit. "Not a word of it. A set of idle chatterboxes, how should they know!"

"They may be wrong, of course," returned the mother, "I can't tell about that, though I don't think it 's at all unlikely that they 're in the right, for the talk is that the old gentleman had put by a little money that nobody knew of, not even that ugly little man you talk to me about—what 's his name—Quilp; and that he and Miss Nell have gone to live abroad where it can't be taken from them, and they will never be disturbed. That don't seem very far out of the way, now, do it?"

Kit scratched his head mournfully, in reluctant admission that it did not, and

clambering up to the old nail took down the cage and set himself to clean it and to feed the bird. His thoughts reverting from this occupation to the little old gentleman who had given him the shilling, he suddenly recollected that that was the very day—nay, nearly the very hour—at which the little old gentleman had said he should be at the notary's house again. He no sooner remembered this, than he hung up the cage with great precipitation, and hastily explaining the nature of his errand, went off at full speed to the appointed place.

It was some minutes after the time when he reached the spot, which was a considerable distance from his home, but by great good luck the little old gentleman had not yet arrived; at least there was no pony-chaise to be seen, and it was not likely that he had come and gone again in so short a space. Greatly relieved to find that he was not too late, Kit leant against a lamp-post to take breath, and waited the advent of the pony and his charge.

Sure enough, before long the pony came trotting round the corner of the street, looking as obstinate as pony might, and picking his steps as if he were spying about for the cleanest places, and would by no means dirty his feet or hurry himself inconveniently. Behind the pony sat the little old gentleman, and by the old gentleman's side sat the little old lady, carrying just such a nosegay as she had brought before.

The old gentleman, the old lady, the pony, and the chaise, came up the street in perfect unanimity, until they arrived within some half a dozen doors of the notary's house, when the pony, deceived by a brass-plate beneath a tailor's knocker, came to a halt, and maintained, by a sturdy silence, that that was the house they wanted.

"Now, sir, will you have the goodness to go on? this is *not* the place," said the old gentleman.

The pony looked with great attention into a fire-plug which was near him, and appeared to be quite absorbed in contemplating it.

"Oh dear, such a naughty Whisker!" cried the old lady. "After being so good too, and coming along so well! I am quite ashamed of him. I don't know what we are to do with him, I really don't."

The pony having thoroughly satisfied himself as to the nature and properties of the fire-plug, looked into the air after his old enemies the flies, and as there happened to be one of them tickling his ear at that moment he shook his head and whisked his tail, after which he appeared full of thought but quite comfortable and collected. The old gentleman having exhausted his powers of persuasion, alighted to lead him, whereupon the pony, perhaps because he held this to be a sufficient concession, perhaps because he happened to catch sight of the other brass-plate, or perhaps because he was in a spiteful humour, darted off with the old lady and stopped at the right house, leaving the old gentleman to come panting on behind.

It was then that Kit presented himself at the pony's head, and touched his hat with a smile.

"Why, bless me," cried the old gentleman, "the lad *is* here! My dear, do you see?"

"I said I'd be here, sir," said Kit, patting Whisker's neck. "I hope you've had a pleasant ride, sir. He's a very nice little pony."

"My dear," said the old gentleman.—"This is an uncommon lad; a good lad, I'm sure."

"I am sure he is," rejoined the old lady. "A very good lad, and I am sure he is a good son."

Kit acknowledged these expressions of confidence by touching his hat again and blushing very much. The old gentleman then handed the old lady out, and after looking at him with an approving smile, they went into the house — talking about him as they went, Kit could not help feeling. Presently Mr. Witherden, smelling very hard at the nosegay, came to the window and looked at him, and after that Mr. Abel came and looked at him, and after that the old gentleman and lady came and looked at him again, and after that they all came and looked at him together, which Kit, feeling very much embarrassed by, made a pretence of not observing. Therefore he patted the pony more and more;—and this liberty the pony most handsomely permitted.

The faces had not disappeared from the window many moments, when Mr. Chuckster in his official coat, and with his hat hanging on his head just as it had happened to fall from its peg, appeared upon the pavement, and telling him he was wanted inside, bade him go in and he would mind the chaise the while. In giving him this direction, Mr. Chuckster remarked that he wished he might be blessed if he could make out whether he (Kit) was "precious raw," or "precious deep," but intimated by a distrustful shake of the head, that he inclined to the latter opinion.

Kit entered the office in a great tremor, for he was not used to going among strange ladies and gentlemen, and the tin boxes and bundles of dusty papers had in his eyes

an awful and venerable air. Mr. Witherden, too, was a bustling gentleman who talked loud and fast, and all eyes were upon him, and he was very shabby.

"Well, boy," said Mr. Witherden, "you came to work out that shilling;—not to get another, hey?"

"No, indeed, sir," replied Kit, taking courage to look up. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Father alive?" said the notary.

"Dead, sir."

"Mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Married again—eh?"

Kit made answer, not without some indignation, that she was a widow with three children, and that as to her marrying again, if the gentleman knew her he wouldn't think of such a thing. At this reply Mr. Witherden buried his nose in the flowers again, and whispered behind the nosegay to the old gentleman that he believed the lad was as honest a lad as need be.

"Now," said Mr. Garland, when he had made some further inquiries of him, "I am not going to give you anything—"

"Thank you, sir," Kit replied, and quite seriously, too, for this announcement seemed to free him from the suspicion which the notary had hinted.

"—But," resumed the old gentleman,—"perhaps I may want to know something more about you, so tell me where you live and I'll put it down in my pocket-book."

Kit told him, and the old gentleman wrote down the address with his pencil.—He had scarcely done so, when there was a great uproar in the street, and the old lady hurrying to the window cried that Whisker had run away, upon which Kit darted out to the rescue, and the others followed.

It seemed that Mr. Chuckster had been standing with his hands in his pockets looking carelessly at the pony, and occasionally insulting him with such admonitione as—"Stand still,"—"Be quiet,"—"Woa-a-a," and the like, which by a pony of spirit cannot be borne. Consequently, the pony being deterred by no considerations of duty or obedience, and not having before him the slightest fear of the human eye, had at length started off, and was at that moment rattling down the street,—Mr. Chuckster, with his hat off and a pen behind his ear, hanging on in the rear of the chaise and making futile attempts to draw it the other way, to the unspeakable admiration of all beholders. Even in running away, however, Whisker was perverse, for he had not gone very far when he suddenly stopped, and before assistance could be rendered, commenced backing at nearly as quick a pace as he had gone forward. By these means Mr. Chuckster was pushed and hustled to the office again, in a most inglorious manner, and arrived in a state of great exhaustion and discomfiture.

The old lady then stepped into her seat, and Mr. Abel (whom they had come to fetch) into his. The old gentleman, after reasoning with the pony on the extreme impropriety of his conduct, and making the best amends in his power to Mr. Chuckster, took his place also, and they drove away, waving a farewell to the notary and his clerk, and more than once turning to nod kindly to Kit as he watched them from the road.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

Kit turned away and very soon forgot the pony, and the chaise, and the little old lady, and the little old gentleman, and the little young gentleman to boot, in thinking what could have become of his late master and his lovely grandchild, who were the fountain-head of all his meditations. Still casting about for some plausible means of accounting for their non-appearance, and of persuading himself that they must soon return, he bent his steps towards home, intending to finish the task which the sudden recollection of his contract had interrupted, and then to sally forth once more to seek his fortune for the day.

When he came to the corner of the court in which he lived, lo and behold, there was the pony again! Yes, there he was, looking more obstinate than ever; and alone in the chaise, keeping a steady watch upon his every wink, sat Mr. Abel, who, lifting up his eyes by chance and seeing Kit pass by, nodded to him as though he would have nodded his head off.

Kit wondered to see the pony again, so near his own home too, but it never occurred to him for what purpose the pony might have come there, or where the old lady and the old gentleman had gone, until he lifted the latch of the door, and walking in, found them seated in the room in conversation with his mother, at which unexpected sight he pulled off his hat and made his best bow in some confusion.

"We are here before you, you see, Christopher," said Mr. Garland smiling.

"Yes, sir," said Kit; and as he said it he looked towards his mother for an explanation of the visit.

"The gentleman's been kind enough, my dear," said she, in reply to this mute interrogation, "to ask me whether you were in a good place, or in any place at all; and when I told him no, you were not in any, he was so good as to say that——"

"That we wanted a good lad in our house," said the old gentleman and the old lady both together, "and that perhaps we might think of it, if we found everything as we would wish it to be."

As this thinking of it plainly meant the thinking of engaging Kit, he immediately partook of his mother's anxiety, and fell into a great flutter; for the little old couple were very methodical and cautious, and asked so many questions that he began to be afraid there was no chance of his success.

"You see, my good woman," said Mrs. Garland to Kit's mother, "that it's necessary to be very careful and particular in such a matter as this, for we're only three in family, and are very quiet regular folks, and it would be a sad thing if we made any kind of mistake, and found things different from what we hoped and expected."

To this, Kit's mother replied, that certainly it was quite true, and quite right, and quite proper, and Heaven forbid that she should shrink, or have cause to shrink, from any inquiry into her character or that of her son, who was a very good son though she was his mother, in which respect, she was bold to say, he took after his father, who was not only a good son to *his* mother, but the best of husbands and the best of fathers besides, which Kit could and would corroborate she knew, and so would little Jacob and the baby likewise, if they were old enough, which unfortunately they were not, though as they didn't know what a loss they had had, perhaps it was a great deal better that they should be as young as they were; and so Kit's mother wound up a long story by wiping her eyes with her apron, and patting little Jacob's head, who was rocking the cradle and staring with all his might at the strange lady and gentleman.

When Kit's mother had done speaking, the old lady struck in again, and said that she was quite sure she was a very honest and very respectable person, or she never would have expressed herself in that manner, and that certainly the appearance of the children and the cleanliness of the house deserved great praise, and did her the utmost credit, whereat Kit's mother dropped a curtsy and became consoled. Then the good woman entered into a long and minute account of Kit's life and history, from the earliest period down to that time, not omitting to make mention of his miraculous fall out of a back-parlour window when an infant of tender years, or his uncommon sufferings in a state of measles, which were illustrated by correct imitations of the plaintive manner in which he called for toast and water, day and night, and said "don't cry, mother, I shall soon be better;" for proof of which statements reference was made to Mrs. Green, lodger, at the cheesemonger's round the corner, and divers other ladies and gentlemen in various parts of England and Wales (and one Mr. Brown, who was supposed to be then a corporal in the East Indies, and who could of course be found with very little trouble), within whose personal knowledge the circumstances had occurred. This nar

ration ended, Mr. Garland put some questions to Kit respecting his qualifications and general acquirements, while Mrs. Garland noticed the children, and hearing from Kit's mother certain remarkable circumstances which had attended the birth of each, related certain other remarkable circumstances which had attended the birth of her own son, Mr. Abel, from which it appeared that both Kit's mother and herself had been, above and beyond all other women of what condition or age soever, peculiarly hemmed in with perils and dangers. Lastly, inquiry was made into the nature and extent of Kit's wardrobe, and a small advance being made to improve the same, he was formally hired at an annual income of six pounds, over and above his board and lodging, by Mr. and Mrs. Garland, of Abel Cottage, Finchley.

It would be difficult to say which party appeared most pleased with this arrangement, the conclusion of which was hailed with nothing but pleasant looks and cheerful smiles on both sides. It was settled that Kit should repair to his new abode on the next day but one, in the morning; and finally, the little old couple, after bestowing a bright half-crown on little Jacob and another on the baby, took their leaves; being escorted as far as the street by their new attendant, who held the obdurate pony by the bridle while they took their seats, and saw them drive away with a lightened heart.

"Well, mother," said Kit, hurrying back into the house, "I think my fortune 's about made now."

"I should think it was indeed, Kit," rejoined his mother. "Six pound a year! Only think!"

"Ah!" said Kit, trying to maintain the gravity which the consideration of such a sum demanded, but grinning with delight in spite of himself. "There 's a property!"

Kit drew a long breath when he had said this, and putting his hands deep into his pockets, as if there were one year's wages at least in each, looked at his mother, as though he saw through her, and down an immense perspective of sovereigns beyond.

"Please God we 'll make such a lady of you for Sundays, mother! such a scholar of Jacob, such a child of the baby, such a room of the one up stairs! Six pound a year!"

"Hem!" croaked a strange voice. "What's that about six pound a year? What about six pound a year?" And as the voice made this inquiry, Daniel Quilp walked in with Richard Swiveller at his heels.

"Who said he was to have six pound a year?" said Quilp, looking sharply round. "Did the old man say it, or did little Nel' say it? And what 's he to have it for, and where are they, eh?"

The good woman was so much alarmed by the sudden apparition of this unknown piece of ugliness, that she hastily caught the baby from its cradle and retreated into the furthest corner of the room; while little Jacob, sitting upon his stool with his hands on his knees, looked full at him in a species of fascination, roaring lustily all the time. Richard Swiveller took an easy observation of the family over Mr. Quilp's head, and Quilp himself with his hands in his pockets, smiled in an exquisite enjoyment of the commotion he occasioned.

"Don't be frightened, mistress," said Quilp, after a pause. "Your son knows me; I don't eat babies; I don't like 'em. It will be as well to stop that young screamer though, in case I should be tempted to do him a mischief. Holloa, sir! Will you be quiet?"

Little Jacob stemmed the course of two tears which he was squeezing out of his eyes, and instantly subsided into a silent horror.

"Mind you don't break out again, you villain," said Quilp, looking sternly at him, "or I 'll make faces at you and throw you into fits, I will. Now you sir, why haven't you been to me as you promised?"

"What should I come for?" retorted Kit. "I hadn't any business with you, no more than you had with me."

"Here, mistress," said Quilp, turning quickly away, and appealing from Kit to his mother. "When did his old master come or send here last? Is he here now? If not, where 's he gone?"

"He has not been here at all," she replied. "I wish we knew where they have gone, for it would make my son a good deal easier in his mind, and me too. If you 're the gentleman named Mr. Quilp, I should have thought you 'd have known, and so I told him only this very day."

"Humph!" muttered Quilp, evidently disappointed to believe that this was true. "That 's what you tell this gentleman too, is it?"

"If the gentleman comes to ask the same question, I can't tell him anything else, sir; and I only wish I could, for our own sakes," was the reply.

Quilp glanced at Richard Swiveller, and observed, that, having met him on the threshold, he assumed that he had come in search of some intelligence of the fugitives. He supposed he was right?

"Yes," said Dick, "that was the object of the present expedition. I fancied it pos-

able—but let us go ring fancy's knell. *I'll begin it.*"

"You seem disappointed," observed Quilp.

"A baffler, sir, a baffler, that's all," returned Dick. "I have entered upon a speculation which has proved a baffler; and a being of brightness and beauty will be offered up a sacrifice at Cheggs's altar. That's all, sir."

The dwarf eyed Richard with a sarcastic smile, but Richard, who had been taking a rather strong lunch with a friend, observed him not, and continued to deplore his fate with mournful and despondent looks. Quilp plainly discerned that there was some secret reason for this visit and his uncommon disappointment, and, in the hope that there might be means of mischief lurking beneath it, resolved to worm it out. He had no sooner adopted this resolution, than he conveyed as much honesty into his face as it was capable of expressing, and sympathised with Mr. Swiveller exceedingly.

"I'm disappointed myself," said Quilp, "out of mere friendly feeling for them; but you have real reasons, private reasons I have no doubt, for your disappointment, and therefore it comes heavier than mine."

"Why, of course it does," Dick observed, testily.

"Upon my word, I'm very sorry, very sorry. I'm rather cast down myself. As we are companions in adversity, shall we be companions in the surest way of forgetting it? If you had no particular business, now, to lead you in another direction," urged Quilp, plucking him by the sleeve, and looking slyly up into his face out of the corners of his eyes, "there is a house by the water-side where they have some of the noblest Schiedam—reputed to be smuggled, but that's between ourselves—that can be got in all the world. The landlord knows me. There's a little summer-house overlooking the river, where we might take a glass of this delicious liquor with a whiff of the best tobacco—it's in this case, and of the rarest quality, to my certain knowledge—and be perfectly snug and happy, could we possibly contrive it; or is there any very particular engagement that peremptorily takes you another way, Mr. Swiveller, eh?"

As the dwarf spoke, Dick's face relaxed into a compliant smile, and his brows slowly unbent. By the time he had finished, Dick was looking down at Quilp in the same sly manner as Quilp was looking up at him, and there remained nothing more to be done but to set out for the house in question. This they did, straightway. The moment their backs were turned, little Jacob thawed, and resumed his crying from the point where Quilp had frozen him.

The summer-house of which Mr. Quilp had spoken was a rugged wooden box, rotten and bare to see, which overhung the river's mud, and threatened to slide down into it. The tavern to which it belonged was a crazy building, sapped and undermined by the rats, and only upheld by great bars of wood which were reared against its walls, and had propped it up so long that even they were decaying and yielding with their load, and of a windy night might be heard to creak and crack as if the whole fabric were about to come toppling down. The house stood—if anything so old and feeble could be said to stand—on a piece of waste ground, blighted with the unwholesome smoke of factory chimneys, and echoing the clank of iron wheels and rush of troubled water. Its internal accommodations amply fulfilled the promise of the outside. The rooms were low and damp, the clammy walls were pierced with chinks and holes, the rotten floors had sunk from their level, the very beams started from their places and warned the timid stranger from their neighbourhood.

To this inviting spot, entreating him to observe its beauties as they passed along, Mr. Quilp led Richard Swiveller, and on the table of the summer-house, scored deep with many a gallows and initial letter, there soon appeared a wooden keg, full of the vaunted liquor. Drawing it off into the glasses with the skill of a practised hand, and mixing it with about a third part of water, Mr. Quilp assigned to Richard Swiveller his portion, and lighting his pipe from an end of candle in a very old and battered lantern, drew himself together upon a seat and puffed away.

"Is it good?" said Quilp, as Richard Swiveller smacked his lips, "is it strong and fiery? Does it make you wink, and choak, and your eyes water, and your breath come short—does it?"

"Does it?" cried Dick, throwing away a part of the contents of his glass, and filling it up with water, "why, man, you don't mean to tell me that you drink such fire as this?"

"No!" rejoined Quilp. "Not drink it! Look here. And here. And here again. Not drink it!"

As he spoke, Daniel Quilp drew off and drank three small glass-fulls of the raw spirit, and then with a horrible grimace took a great many pulls at his pipe, and swallowing the smoke, discharged it in a heavy cloud from his nose. This feat accomplished he drew himself together in

his former position, and laughed excessively.

"Give us a toast!" cried Quilp, rattling on the table in a dexterous manner with his fist and elbow alternately, in a kind of tune, "a woman, a beauty. Let's have a beauty for our toast and empty our glasses to the last drop. Her name, come!"

"If you want a name,"—said Dick,—"here's Sophy Wackles."

"Sophy Wackles!" screamed the dwarf. "Miss Sophy Wackles that is—Mrs. Richard Swiveller that shall be—that shall be—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah!" said Dick, "you might have said that a few weeks ago. But it won't do now, my buck. Immolating herself upon the shrine of Cheggs—"

"Poison Cheggs, cut Cheggs's ears off," rejoined Quilp. "I won't hear of Cheggs. Her name is Swiveller or nothing. I'll drink her health again, and her father's, and her mother's; and to all her sisters and brothers—the glorious family of the Wackleses—all the Wackleses in one glass—down with it to the dregs!"

"Well," said Richard Swiveller, stopping short in the act of raising the glass to his lips and looking at the dwarf in a species of stupor as he flourished his arms and legs about: "you're a jolly fellow, but of all the jolly fellows I ever saw or heard of, you have the queerest and most extraordinary way with you, upon my life you have."

This candid declaration tended rather to increase than restrain Mr. Quilp's eccentricities, and Richard Swiveller, astonished to see him in such a roystering vein, and drinking not a little himself, for company, began imperceptibly to become more companionable and confiding, so that, being judiciously led on by Mr. Quilp, he grew at last very confiding indeed. Having once got him into this mood, and knowing now the key-note to strike whenever he was at a loss, Daniel Quilp's task was comparatively an easy one, and he was soon in possession of the whole details of the scheme contrived between the easy Dick and his more designing friend.

"Stop!" cried Quilp.—"That's the thing, that's the thing. It can be brought about, it shall be brought about. There's my hand upon it; I'm your friend from this minute."

"What! do you think there's still a chance?" inquired Dick, in surprise at this encouragement.

"A chance!" echoed the dwarf, "a certainty! Sophy Wackles may become a Cheggs or anything else she likes, but not a Swiveller. Oh you lucky dog! He's richer than any Jew alive; you're a made man. I see in you now nothing but Nelly's husband, rolling in gold and silver. I'll help you, it shall be done. Mind my words, it shall be done."

"But how?" said Dick.

"There's plenty of time," rejoined the dwarf, "and it shall be done. We'll sit down and talk it over again all the way through. Fill your glass while I'm gone. I shall be back directly—directly."

With these hasty words, Daniel Quilp withdrew into a dismantled skittle-ground behind the public-house, and, throwing himself upon the ground actually screamed and rolled about in uncontrollable delight.

"Here's sport!" he cried, "sport ready to my hand, all invented and arranged, and only to be enjoyed. It was this shallow-pated fellow who made my bones ache t'other day, was it? It was his friend and fellow-plotter, Mr. Trent, that once made eyes at Mrs. Quilp, and leered and looked, was it? After labouring for two or three years in their precious scheme, to find that they've got a beggar at last, and one of them tied for life. Ha, ha, ha! He shall marry Nell. He shall have her, and I'll be the first man, when the knot's tied hard and fast, to tell 'em what they've gained and what I've helped 'em to. Here will be a clearing of old scores, here will be a time to remind 'em what a capital friend I was, and how I helped 'em to the heiress. Ha, ha, ha!"

In the height of his ecstasy, Mr. Quilp had like to have met with a disagreeable check, for, rolling very near a broken dog-kennel, there leapt forth a large fierce dog, who, but that his chain was of the shortest, would have given him a disagreeable salute. As it was, the dwarf remained upon his back in perfect safety, taunting the dog with hideous faces, and triumphing over him in his inability to advance another inch, though there were not a couple of feet between them.

"Why don't you come and bite me, why don't you come and tear me to pieces, you coward," said Quilp, hissing and worrying the animal till he was nearly mad. "You're afraid, you bully, you're afraid, you know you are."

The dog tore and strained at his chain with starting eyes and furious bark, but there the dwarf lay, snapping his fingers with gestures of defiance and contempt. When he had sufficiently recovered from his delight, he rose, and with his arms a-kimbo, achieved a kind of demon-dance round the kennel, just without the limits of the chain, driving the dog quite wild. Having by this means composed his spirits

and put himself in a pleasant train, he returned to his unsuspicious companion, whom he found looking at the tide with exceeding gravity, and thinking of that same gold and silver which Mr. Quilp had mentioned.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

The remainder of that day and the whole of the next, were a busy time for the Nubbles family, to whom everything connected with Kit's outfit and departure was matter of as great moment as if he had been about to penetrate into the interior of Africa, or to take a cruise round the world. It would be difficult to suppose that there ever was a box which was opened and shut so many times within four-and-twenty hours, as that which contained his wardrobe and necessaries; and certainly there never was one which to two small eyes presented such a mine of clothing as this mighty chest, with its three shirts and proportionate allowance of stockings and pocket-handkerchiefs, disclosed to the astonished vision of little Jacob. At last it was conveyed to the carrier's, at whose house at Finchley Kit was to find it next day; and the box being gone, there remained but two questions for consideration: firstly, whether the carrier would lose, or dishonestly feign to lose, the box upon the road; and secondly, whether Kit's mother perfectly understood how to take care of herself in the absence of her son.

"I don't think there's hardly a chance of his really losing it, but carriers are under great temptation to pretend they lose things, no doubt," said Mrs. Nubbles, apprehensively, in reference to the first point.

"No doubt about it," returned Kit, with a serious look; "upon my word, mother, I don't think it was right to trust it to itself. Somebody ought to have gone with it, I'm afraid."

"We can't help it now," said his mother; "but it was foolish and wrong. People oughtn't to be tempted."

Kit inwardly resolved that he would never tempt a carrier any more, save with an empty box; and having formed this Christian determination, he turned his thoughts to the second question.

"You know you must keep up your spirits, mother, and not be lonesome because I'm not at home. I shall very often be able to look in when I come into town I dare say, and I shall send you a letter sometimes, and when the quarter comes round I can get a holiday of course; and then see if we don't take little Jacob to the play, and let him know what oysters means."

"I hope plays mayn't be sinful, Kit, but I'm a'most afraid," said Mrs. Nubbles.

"I know who has been putting that in your head," rejoined her son disconsolately; "that's Little Bethel again. Now I say, mother, pray don't take to going there regularly, for if I was to see your good-humoured face that has always made home cheerful, turned into a grievous one, and the baby trained to look grievous too, and to call itself a young sinner (bless its heart) and a child of the devil (which is calling its dead father names); if I was to see this, and see little Jacob looking grievous likewise, I should so take it to heart that I'm sure I should go and list for a soldier, and run my head on purpose against the first cannon ball I saw coming my way."

"Oh, Kit, don't talk like that."

"I would indeed, mother, and unless you want to make me feel very wretched and uncomfortable, you'll keep that bow on your bonnet, which you'd more than half a mind to pull off last week. Can you suppose there's any harm in looking as cheerful and being as cheerful as our poor circumstances will permit? Do I see anything in the way I'm made, which calls upon me to be a snivelling, solemn, whispering chap, sneaking about as if I couldn't help it, and expressing myself in a most unpleasant snuffle? on the contrairy, don't I see every reason why I shouldn't? Just hear this! Ha ha ha! An't that as nat'ral as walking, and as good for the health? Ha ha ha! An't that as nat'ral as a sheep's bleating, or a pig's grunting, or a horse's neighing, or a bird's singing? Ha ha ha! Isn't it, mother?"

There was something contagious in Kit's laugh, for his mother, who had looked grave before, first subsided into a smile, and then fell to joining in it heartily, which occasioned Kit to say that he knew it was natural, and to laugh the more. Kit and his mother, laughing together in a pretty loud key, woke the baby, who, finding that there was something very jovial and agreeable in progress, was no sooner in its mother's arms than it began to kick and laugh most vigorously. This new illustration of his argument so tickled Kit, that he fell backward in his chair in a state of exhaustion, pointing at the baby and shaking his sides till he rocked again. After recovering twice or thrice, and as often relapsing, he wiped his eyes and said grace; and a very cheerful meal their scanty supper was.

With more kisses, and hugs, and tears, than many young gentlemen who start upon their travels and leave well-stocked homes behind them, would deem within the bounds of probability (if matter so low could be herein set down,) Kit left the house at an early hour next morning, and set out to walk to Finchley; feeling a sufficient pride in his appearance to have warranted his excommunication from Little Bethel from that time forth, if he had ever been one of that mournful congregation.

Lest anybody should feel a curiosity to know how Kit was clad, it may be briefly remarked that he wore no livery, but was dressed in a coat of pepper-and-salt with waistcoat of canary colour, and nether garments of iron grey; besides these glories, he shone in the lustre of a new pair of boots and an extremely stiff and shiny hat, which on being struck anywhere with the knuckles, sounded like a drum. And in this attire, rather wondering that he attracted so little attention, and attributing the circumstance to the insensibility of those who got up early, he made his way towards Abel Cottage.

Without encountering any more remarkable adventure on the road, than meeting a lad in a brimless hat, the exact counterpart of his old one, on whom he bestowed half the sixpence he possessed, Kit arrived in course of time at the carrier's house, where, to the lasting honour of human nature, he found the box in safety. Receiving from the wife of this immaculate man a direction to Mr. Garland's, he took the box upon his shoulder and repaired thither directly.

To be sure, it was a beautiful little cottage with a thatched roof and little spires at the gable-ends, and pieces of stained glass in some of the windows, almost as large as pocket-books. On one side of the house was a little stable, just the size for the pony, with a little room over it, just the size for Kit. White curtains were fluttering, and birds in cages that looked as bright as if they were made of gold, were singing at the windows; plants were arranged on either side of the path, and

clustered about the door; and the garden was bright with flowers in full bloom, which shed a sweet odour all round, and had a charming and elegant appearance. Everything, within the house and without, seemed to be the perfection of neatness and order. In the garden there was not a weed to be seen, and to judge from some dapper gardening-tools, a basket, and a pair of gloves which were lying in one of the walks, old Mr. Garland had been at work in it that very morning.

Kit looked about him, and admired, and looked again, and this a great many times before he could make up his mind to turn his head another way and ring the bell. There was abundance of time to look about him again though, when he had rung it, for nobody came, so after ringing twice or thrice he sat down upon his box, and waited.

He rang the bell a great many times, and yet nobody came. But at last, as he was sitting upon the box thinking about giants' castles, and princesses tied up to pegs by the hair of their heads, and dragons bursting out from behind gates, and other incidents of the like nature, common in story-books to youths of low degree on their first visit to strange houses, the door was gently opened, and a little servant-girl, very tidy, modest, and demure, but very pretty too, appeared.

"I suppose you 're Christopher, sir," said the servant-girl.

Kit got off the box, and said yes, he was.

"I'm afraid you 've rung a good many times, perhaps," she rejoined, "but we couldn't hear you, because we 've been catching the pony."

Kit rather wondered what this meant, but as he couldn't stop there, asking questions, he shouldered the box again and followed the girl into the hall, where through a back-door he descried Mr. Garland leading Whisker in triumph up the garden, after that self-willed pony had (as he afterwards learned) dodged the family round a small paddock in the rear, for one hour and three-quarters.

The old gentleman received him very kindly, and so did the old lady, whose previous good opinion of him was greatly enhanced by his wiping his boots on the mat until the soles of his feet burnt again. He was then taken into the parlour, to be inspected in his new clothes; and when he had been surveyed several times, and had afforded by his appearance unlimited satisfaction, he was taken into the stable (where the pony received him with uncommon complaisance); and thence into the little chamber he had already observed, which was very clean and comfortable; and thence into the garden, in which the old gentle-

man told him he would be taught to employ himself, and where he told him besides, what great things he meant to do to make him comfortable and happy, if he found he deserved it. All these kindnesses, Kit acknowledged with various expressions of gratitude, and so many touches of the new hat, that the brim suffered considerably.—When the old gentleman had said all he had to say in the way of promise and advice, and Kit had said all he had to say in the way of assurance and thankfulness, he was handed over again to the old lady, who, summoning the little servant-girl (whose name was Barbara) instructed her to take him down-stairs and give him something to eat and drink, after his walk.

Down-stairs, therefore, Kit went: and at the bottom of the stairs there was such a kitchen as was never before seen or heard of out of a toy-shop window, with everything in it as bright and glowing, and as precisely ordered too, as Barbara herself. And in this kitchen, Kit sat himself down at a table as white as a table-cloth, to eat cold meat, and drink small ale, and use his knife and fork the more awkwardly, because there was an unknown Barbara looking on and observing him.

It did not appear, however, that there was anything remarkably tremendous about this strange Barbara, who, having lived a very quiet life, blushed very much, and was quite as embarrassed, and uncertain what she ought to say or do, as Kit could possibly be. When he had sat for some little time, attentive to the ticking of the sober clock, he ventured to glance curiously at the dresser, and there, among the plates and dishes, were Barbara's little work-box, with a sliding lid to shut in the balls of cotton, and Barbara's prayer-book, and Barbara's hymn book, and Barbara's bible.—Barbara's little looking-glass hung in a good light near the window, and Barbara's bonnet was on a nail behind the door. From all these mute signs and tokens of her presence, he naturally glanced at Barbara herself, who sat as mute as they, shelling peas into a dish; and just when Kit was looking at her eyelashes and wondering—quite in the simplicity of his heart—what colour her eyes might be, it perversely happened that Barbara raised her head a little to look at him, when both pair of eyes were hastily withdrawn, and Kit leant over his plate, and Barbara over her pea-shells, each in extreme confusion at having been detected by the other.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

Mr. Richard Swiveller wending homewards from the Wilderness (for such was the appropriate name of Quilp's choice retreat), after a sinuous and corkscrew fashion, with many checks and stumbles; after stopping suddenly and staring about him, then as suddenly running forward for a few paces, and as suddenly halting again and shaking his head; doing everything with a jerk and nothing by premeditation;—Mr. Richard Swiveller wending his way homewards after this fashion, which is considered by evil-minded men to be symbolical of intoxication, and is not held by such persons to denote that state of deep wisdom and reflection in which the actor knows himself to be, began to think that possibly he had misplaced his confidence, and that the dwarf might not be precisely the sort of person to whom to entrust a secret of such delicacy and importance. And being led and tempted on by this remorseful thought into a condition which the evil-minded class before referred to would term the maudlin state or stage of drunkenness, it occurred to Mr. Swiveller to cast his hat upon the ground, and moan, crying aloud that he was an unhappy orphan, and that if he had not been an unhappy orphan things had never come to this.

"Left an infant by my parents, at an early age," said Mr. Swiveller, bewailing his hard lot, "cast upon the world in my tenderest period, and thrown upon the mercies of a deluding dwarf, who can wonder at my weakness! Here's a miserable orphan for you. Here," said Mr. Swiveller, raising his voice to a high pitch, and looking sleepily round, "is a miserable orphan!"

"Then," said somebody hard by, "let me be a father to you."

Mr. Swiveller swayed himself to and fro to preserve his balance, and, looking into a kind of haze which seemed to surround him, at last perceived two eyes dimly twinkling through the mist, which he observed after a short time were in the neighbourhood of a nose and mouth. Casting his eyes down towards that quarter in which, with reference to a man's face, his legs are usually to be found, he observed that the face had a body attached; and when he looked more intently, he was satisfied that the person was Mr. Quilp,

who indeed had been in his company all the time, but whom he had some vague idea of having left a mile or two behind.

"You have deceived an orphan, sir," said Mr. Swiveller, solemnly.

"I! I'm a second father to you," replied Quilp.

"You my father, sir!" retorted Dick. "Being all right myself, sir, I request to be left alone--instantly, sir."

"What a funny fellow you are!" cried Quilp.

"Go, sir," returned Dick, leaning against a post and waving his hand. "Go, deceiver, go; some day p'raps you'll waken, from pleasure's dream to know, the grief of orphans forsaken. Will you go, sir?"

The dwarf taking no heed of this adjuration, Mr. Swiveller advanced with the view of inflicting upon him condign chastisement. But forgetting his purpose or changing his mind before he came close to him, he seized his hand and vowed eternal friendship, declaring with an agreeable frankness that from that time forth they were brothers in everything but personal appearance. Then he told his secret all over again, with the addition of being pathetic on the subject of Miss Wackles, who, he gave Mr. Quilp to understand, was the occasion of any slight incoherency he might observe in his speech at that moment, which was attributable solely to the strength of his affection, and not to rosy wine or other fermented liquor. And then they went on arm-in-arm, very lovingly together.

"I'm as sharp," said Quilp to him, at parting, "as sharp as a ferret, and as cunning as a weazel. You bring Trent to me; assure him that I'm his friend, though I fear he a little distrusts me (I don't know why, I have not deserved it), and you've both of you made your fortunes—in perspective."

"That's the worst of it," returned Dick. "These fortunes in perspective, look such a long way off."

"But they look smaller than they really are, on that account," said Quilp, pressing his arm. "You'll have no conception of the value of your prize, until you draw close to it. Mark that."

"D'ye think not?" said Dick.

"Ay, I do; and I am certain of what I say, that's better," returned the dwarf. "You bring Trent to me. Tell him I am his friend and yours—why shouldn't I be?"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't, certainly," replied Dick, "and perhaps there are a great many why you should —at least there would be nothing strange in your wanting to be my friend, if you were a choice spirit, but then you know you're *not* a choice spirit."

"I not a choice spirit!" cried Quilp.

"Devil a bit, sir," returned Dick. "A man of your appearance couldn't be. If you're any spirit at all, sir, you're an evil spirit. Choice spirits," added Dick, smiting himself on the breast, "are quite a different-looking sort of people, you may take your oath of that, sir."

Quilp glanced at his free-spoken friend with a mingled expression of cunning and dislike, and wringing his hand almost at the same moment, declared that he was an uncommon character and had his warmest esteem. With that they parted; Mr. Swiveller to make the best of his way home and sleep himself sober; and Quilp to cogitate upon the discovery he had made, and exult in the prospect of the rich field of enjoyment and reprisal it opened to him.

It was not without great reluctance and misgiving that Mr. Swiveller, next morning, his head racked by the fumes of the renowned Schiedam, repaired to the lodging of his friend Trent (which was in the roof of an old house in an old ghostly inn), and recounted by very slow degrees what had yesterday taken place between him and Quilp. Nor was it without great surprise and much speculation on Quilp's probable motives, nor without many bitter comments on Dick Swiveller's folly, that his friend received the tale.

"I don't defend myself, Fred," said the penitent Richard; "but the fellow has such a queer way with him, and is such an artful dog, that first of all he set me upon thinking whether there was any harm in telling him, and while I was thinking, screwed it out of me. If you had seen him drink and smoke, as I did, you couldn't have kept anything from him. He's a salamander you know, that's what *he* is."

Without inquiring whether salamanders were of necessity good confidential agents, or whether a fire-proof man was as a matter of course trustworthy, Frederick Trent threw himself into a chair, and, burying his head in his hands, endeavoured to fathom the motives which had led Quilp to insinuate himself into Richard Swiveller's confidence—for that the disclosure was of his seeking and had not been spontaneously revealed by Dick, was sufficiently plain from Quilp's seeking his company and enticing him away.

The dwarf had twice encountered him when he was endeavouring to obtain intelligence of the fugitives. This, perhaps, as he had not shown any previous anxiety about them, was enough to awaken suspicion in the breast of a creature so jealous

and distrustful by nature, setting aside any additional impulse to curiosity that he might have derived from Dick's incautious manner. But knowing the scheme they had planned, why should he offer to assist it? This was a question more difficult of solution; but as knaves generally overreach themselves by imputing their own designs to others, the idea immediately presented itself that some circumstance of irritation between Quilp and the old man, arising out of their secret transactions and not unconnected perhaps with his sudden disappearance, now rendered the former desirous of revenging himself upon him by seeking to entrap the sole object of his love and anxiety into a connexion of which he knew he had a dread and hatred. As Frederick Trent himself, utterly regardless of his sister, had this object at heart, only second to the hope of gain, it seemed to him the more likely to be Quilp's main principle of action. Once investing the dwarf with a design of his own in abetting them, which the attainment of their purpose would serve, it was easy to believe him sincere and hearty in the cause; and as there could be no doubt of his proving a powerful and useful auxiliary, Trent determined to accept his invitation and go to his house that night, and if what he said and did, confirmed him in the impression he had formed, to let him share the labour of their plan, but not the profit.

Having revolved these things in his mind and arrived at this conclusion, he communicated to Mr. Swiveller as much of his meditations as he thought proper (Dick would have been perfectly satisfied with less), and giving him the day to recover himself from his late salamandering, accompanied him at evening to Mr. Quilp's house.

Mightily glad Mr. Quilp was to see them, or mightily glad he seemed to be; and fearfully polite Mr. Quilp was to Mrs. Quilp and Mrs. Jiniwin; and very sharp was the look he cast on his wife, to observe how she was affected by the recognition of young Trent. Mrs. Quilp was as innocent as her own mother of any emotion, painful or pleasant, which the sight of him awakened; but as her husband's glance made her timid and confused, and uncertain what to do or what was required of her, Mr. Quilp did not fail to assign her embarrassment to the cause he had in his mind, and while he chuckled at his penetration was secretly exasperated by his jealousy.

Nothing of this appeared, however. On the contrary, Mr. Quilp was all blandness and suavity, and presided over the case-bottle of rum with extraordinary open-heartedness.

"Why, let me see," said Quilp. "It must be a matter of nearly two years since we were first acquainted."

"Nearer three, I think," said Trent.

"Nearer three!" cried Quilp, "how fast time flies! Does it seem as long as that to you, Mrs. Quilp?"

"Yes, I think it seems full three years, Quilp," was the unfortunate reply.

"Oh, indeed, ma'am," thought Quilp, "you have been pining, have you? Very good, ma'am."

"It seems to me but yesterday that you went to Demerara in the Mary Anne," said Quilp; "but yesterday, I declare. Well, I like a little wildness. I was wild myself once."

Mr. Quilp accompanied this admission with such an awful wink, indicative of old rovings and backslidings, that Mrs. Jiniwin was indignant, and could not forbear from remarking under her breath that he might at least put off his confessions until his wife was absent; for which act of boldness and insubordination Mr. Quilp first stared her out of countenance and then drank her health ceremoniously.

"I thought you'd come back directly, Fred. I always thought that," said Quilp, setting down his glass. "And when the Mary Anne returned with you on board, instead of a letter to say what a contrite heart you had and how happy you were in the situation that had been provided for you, I was amused—exceedingly amused. Ha, ha, ha!"

The young man smiled, but not as though the theme were the most agreeable one that could have been selected for his entertainment; and for that reason Quilp pursued it.

"I always will say," he resumed, "that when a rich relation having two young people—sisters or brothers, or brother and sister—dependent on him, attaches himself exclusively to one, and casts off the other he does wrong."

The young man made a movement of impatience, but Quilp went on as calmly as if he were discussing some abstract question in which nobody present had the slightest personal interest.

"It's very true," said Quilp, "that your grandfather urged repeated forgiveness, ingratitude, riot, and extravagance, and all that; but as I told him 'these are common faults.' 'But he's a scoundrel,' said he. 'Granting that,' said I, (for the sake of argument of course), 'a great many young noblemen and gentlemen are scoundrels too!' But he wouldn't be convinced."

"I wonder at that, Mr. Quilp," said the young man, sarcastically.

"Well, so did I at the time," returned

Quilp, "but he was always obstinate. He was in a manner a friend of mine, but he was always obstinate and wrong-headed. Little Nell is a nice girl, a charming girl, but you're her brother, Frederick. You're her brother, after all; as you told him the last time you met, he can't alter that."

"He would if he could, confound him for that and all other kindnesses," said the young man, impatiently. "But nothing can come of this subject now, and let us have done with it in the Devil's name."

"Agreed," returned Quilp, "agreed on my part, readily. Why have I alluded to it? Just to show you, Frederick, that I have always stood your friend. You little knew who was your friend and who your foe; now did you? You thought I was against you, and so there has been a coolness between us; but it was all on your side, entirely on your side. Let's shake hands again, Fred."

With his head sunk down between his shoulders, and a hideous grin overspreading his face, the dwarf stood up and stretched his short arm across the table. After a moment's hesitation, the young man stretched his out to meet it; Quilp clutched his fingers in a grip that for the moment stopped the current of the blood within them, and pressing his other hand upon his lip and frowning towards the unsuspicious Richard, released them and sat down.

This action was not lost upon Trent, who, knowing that Richard Swiveller was a mere tool in his hands and knew no more of his designs than he thought proper to communicate, saw that the dwarf perfectly understood their relative position, and fully entered into the character of his friend. It is something to be appreciated, even in knavery. This silent homage to his superior abilities, no less than a sense of the power with which the dwarf's quick perception had already invested him, inclined the young man towards that ugly worthy, and determined him to profit by his aid.

It being now Mr. Quilp's cue to change the subject with all convenient expedition, lest Richard Swiveller in his heedlessness should reveal anything which it was inexpedient for the women to know, he proposed a game at four-handed cribbage; and partners being cut for, Mr. Quilp fell to Frederick Trent, and Dick himself to Quilp. Mrs. Jiniwin being very fond of cards was carefully excluded by her son-in-law from any participation in the game, and had assigned to her the duty of occasionally replenishing the glasses from the case-bottle; Mr. Quilp from that moment keeping one eye constantly upon her, lest she should by any means procure a taste of the same, and thereby tantalizing the wretched old lady (who was as much attached to the case-bottle as the cards) in a double degree and most ingenious manner.

But it was not to Mrs. Jiniwin alone that Mr. Quilp's attention was restricted, as several other matters required his constant vigilance. Among his various eccentric habits he had a humorous one of always cheating at cards, which rendered necessary on his part, not only a close observance of the game, and a sleight-of-hand in counting and scoring, but also involved the constant correction, by looks, and frowns, and kicks under the table, of Richard Swiveller, who being bewildered by the rapidity with which his cards were told, and the rate at which the pegs travelled down the board, could not be prevented from sometimes expressing his surprise and incredulity. Mrs. Quilp too was the partner of young Trent, and for every look that passed between them, and every word they spoke, and every card they played, the dwarf had eyes and ears; not occupied alone with what was passing above the table, but with signals that might be exchanged beneath it, which he laid all kinds of traps to detect; besides often treading on his wife's toes to see whether she cried out or remained silent under the infliction, in which latter case it would have been quite clear that Trent had been treading on her toes before. Yet, in the midst of all these distractions, the one eye was upon the old lady always, and if she so much as stealthily advanced a tea-spoon towards a neighbouring glass (which she often did), for the purpose of abstracting but one sup of its sweet contents, Quilp's hand would overset it in the very moment of her triumph, and Quilp's mocking voice implore her to regard her precious health. And in any one of these his many cares, from first to last, Quilp never flagged nor faltered.

At length, when they had played a great many rubbers and drawn pretty freely upon the case-bottle, Mr. Quilp warned his lady to retire to rest, and that submissive wife complying, and being followed by her indignant mother, Mr. Swiveller fell asleep. The dwarf beckoning his remaining companion to the other end of the room, held a short conference with him in whispers.

"It's as well not to say more than one can help before our worthy friend," said Quilp, making a grimace towards the slumbering Dick. "Is it a bargain between us, Fred? Shall he marry little rosy Nell by and bye?"

"You have some end of your own to answer of course," returned the other.

"Of course I have, dear Fred," said Quilp, grinning to think how little he suspected what the real end was. "It's retaliation perhaps; perhaps whim. I have influence, Fred, to help or oppose. Which way shall I use it? There are a pair of scales, and it goes into one."

"Throw it into mine then," said Trent.

"It's done, Fred," rejoined Quilp, stretching out his clenched hand and opening it as if he had let some weight fall out. "It's in the scale from this time, and turns it, Fred. Mind that."

"Where have they gone?" asked Trent.

Quilp shook his head, and said that point remained to be discovered, which it might be, easily. When it was, they would begin their preliminary advances. He would visit the old man, or even Richard Swiveller might visit him, and by affecting a deep concern in his behalf and imploring him to settle in some worthy home, lead to the child's remembering him with gratitude and favour. Once impressed to this extent, it would be easy, he said, to win her in a year or two, for she supposed the old man to be poor, as it was a part of his jealous policy (in common with many other misers) to feign to be so, to those about him.

"He has feigned it often enough to me, of late," said Trent.

"Oh! and to me too!" replied the dwarf. "Which is more extraordinary, as I know how rich he really is."

"I suppose you should," said Trent.

"I think I should indeed," rejoined the dwarf, and in that, at least, he spoke the truth.

After a few more whispered words, they returned to the table, and the young man rousing Richard Swiveller informed him that he was waiting to depart. This was welcome news to Dick, who started up directly. After a few words of confidence in the result of their project had been exchanged, they bade the grinning Quilp good night.

Quilp crept to the window as they passed in the street below, and listened. Trent was pronouncing an encomium upon his wife, and they were both wondering by what enchantment she had been brought to marry such a misshapen wretch as he. The dwarf after watching their retreating shadows with a wider grin than his face had yet displayed, stole softly in the dark to bed.

In this hatching of their scheme, neither Trent nor Quilp had had one thought about the happiness or misery of poor innocent Nell. It would have been strange if the careless profligate who was the butt of both, had been harassed by any such consideration; for his high opinion of his own merits and deserts rendered the project rather a laudable one than otherwise; and if he had been visited by so unwonted a guest as reflection, he would — being a brute only in the gratification of his appetites — have soothed his conscience with the plea that he did not mean to beat or kill his wife, and would therefore, after all said and done, be a very tolerable, average husband.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

It was not until they were quite exhausted and could no longer maintain the pace at which they had fled from the race-ground, that the old man and the child ventured to stop, and sit down to rest upon the borders of a little wood. Here, though the course was hidden from their view, they could yet faintly distinguish the noise of distant shouts, the hum of voices, and the beating of drums. Climbing the eminence which lay between them and the spot they had left, the child could even discern the fluttering flags and white tops of booths; but no person was approaching towards them, and their resting-place was solitary and still.

Some time elapsed before she could reassure her trembling companion, or restore him to a state of moderate tranquillity. His disordered imagination represented to him a crowd of persons stealing towards them beneath the cover of the bushes, lurking in every ditch, and peeping from the boughs of every rustling tree. He was haunted by apprehensions of being led captive to some gloomy place where he would be chained and scourged, and worse than all, where Nell could never come to see him, save through iron bars and gratings in the wall. His terrors affected the child. Separation from her grandfather was the greatest evil she could dread; and

feeling for the time as though, go where they would, they were to be hunted down, and could never be safe but in hiding, her heart failed her, and her courage drooped.

In one so young, and so unused to the scenes in which she had lately moved, this sinking of the spirit was not surprising. But, nature often enshrines gallant and noble hearts in weak bosoms — oftenest, God bless her, in female breasts — and when the child, casting her tearful eyes upon the old man, remembered how weak he was, and how destitute and helpless he would be if she failed him, her heart swelled within her, and animated her with new strength and fortitude.

"We are quite safe now, and have nothing to fear, indeed, dear grandfather," she said.

"Nothing to fear!" returned the old man. "Nothing to fear if they took me from thee! Nothing to fear if they parted us! Nobody is true to me. No, not one. Not even Nell!"

"Oh! do not say that," replied the child, "for if ever anybody was true at heart, and earnest, I am. I am sure you know I am."

"Then how," said the old man, looking fearfully round, "how can you bear to think that we are safe, when they are searching for me everywhere, and may come here, and steal upon us, even while we're talking?"

"Because I'm sure we have not been followed," said the child. "Judge for yourself, dear grandfather; look round, and see how quiet and still it is. We are alone together, and may ramble where we like. Not safe! Could I feel easy—did I feel at ease—when any danger threatened you?"

"True, true," he answered, pressing her hand, but still looking anxiously about. "What noise was that?"

"A bird," said the child, "flying into the wood, and leading the way for us to follow. You remember that we said we would walk in woods and fields, and by the side of rivers, and how happy we would be—you remember that? But here, while the sun shines above our heads, and everything is bright and happy, we are sitting sadly down, and losing time. See what a pleasant path; and there's the bird—the same bird—now he flies to another tree, and stays to sing. Come!"

When they rose up from the ground, and took the shady track which led them through the wood, she bounded on before; printing her tiny footsteps in the moss, which rose elastic from so light a pressure, and gave it back as mirrors throw off breath; and thus she lured the old man on, with many a backward look and merry beck, now pointing stealthily to some lone bird as it perched and twittered on a branch that strayed across their path, now stopping to listen to the songs that broke the happy silence, or watch the sun as it trembled through the leaves, and stealing in among the ivied trunks of stout old trees, opened long paths of light. As they passed onward, parting the boughs that clustered in their way, the serenity which the child had first assumed, stole into her breast in earnest; the old man cast no longer fearful looks behind, but felt at ease and cheerful, for the further they passed into the deep green shade, the more they felt that the tranquil mind of God was there and shed its peace on them.

At length the path becoming clearer and less intricate, brought them to the end of the wood, and into a public road. Taking their way along it for a short distance, they came to a lane, so shaded by the trees on either hand that they met together overhead, and arched the narrow way. A broken finger-post announced that this led to a village three miles off; and thither they resolved to bend their steps.

The miles appeared so long that they sometimes thought they must have missed their road. But at last, to their great joy, it led downward in a steep descent, with overhanging banks over which the footpaths led; and the clustered houses of the village peeped out from the woody hollow below.

It was a very small place. The men and boys were playing at cricket on the green; and as the other folks were looking on, they wandered up and down, uncertain where to seek a humble lodging. There was but one old man in the little garden before his cottage, and him they were timid of approaching, for he was the schoolmaster, and had "School" written up over his window in black letters on a white board. He was a pale, simple-looking man, of a spare and meagre habit, and sat among his flowers and beehives, smoking his pipe, in the little porch before his door.

"Speak to him, dear," the old man whispered.

"I am almost afraid to disturb him," said the child, timidly. "He does not seem to see us. Perhaps if we wait a little, he may look this way."

They waited, but the schoolmaster cast no look towards them, and still sat, thoughtful and silent, in the little porch. He had a kind face. In his plain old suit of black, he looked pale and meagre. They fancied, too, a lonely air about him and his house, but perhaps that was because the other

people formed a merry company upon the green, and he seemed the only solitary man in all the place.

They were very tired, and the child would have been bold enough to address even a schoolmaster, but for something in his manner which seemed to denote that he was uneasy or distressed. As they stood hesitating at a little distance, they saw that he sat for a few minutes at a time like one in a brown study, then laid aside his pipe and took a few turns in his garden, then approached the gate and looked towards the green, then took up his pipe again with a sigh, and sat down thoughtfully as before.

As nobody else appeared and it would soon be dark, Nell at length took courage, and when he had resumed his pipe and seat, ventured to draw near, leading her grandfather by the hand. The slight noise they made in raising the latch of the wicket-gate, caught his attention. He looked at them kindly, but seemed disappointed too, and slightly shook his head.

Nell dropped a curtsy, and told him they were poor travellers who sought a shelter for the night which they would gladly pay for, so far as their means allowed. The schoolmaster looked earnestly at her as she spoke, laid aside his pipe, and rose up directly.

"If you could direct us anywhere, sir," said the child, "we should take it very kindly."

"You have been walking a long way," said the schoolmaster.

"A long way, sir," the child replied.

"You're a young traveller, my child," he said, laying his hand gently on her head. "Your grandchild, friend?"

"Ay, sir," cried the old man, "and the stay and comfort of my life."

"Come in," said the schoolmaster.

Without further preface he conducted them into his little school-room, which was parlour and kitchen likewise, and told them they were welcome to remain under his roof till morning. Before they had done thanking him, he spread a coarse white cloth upon the table, with knives and platters; and bringing out some bread and cold meat and a jug of beer, besought them to eat and drink.

The child looked round the room as she took her seat. There were a couple of forms, notched and cut and inked all over; a small deal desk perched on four legs, at which no doubt the master sat; a few dog's-eared books upon a high shelf; and beside them a motley collection of peg-tops, balls, kites, fishing-lines, marbles, half-eaten apples, and other confiscated property of idle

urchins. Displayed on hooks upon the wall in all their terrors, were the cane and ruler; and near them, on a small shelf of its own, the dunce's cap, made of old newspapers and decorated with glaring wafers of the largest size. But, the great ornaments of the walls, were certain moral sentences fairly copied in good round text, and well-worked sums in simple addition and multiplication, evidently achieved by the same hand, which were plentifully pasted all round the room: for the double purpose, as it seemed, of bearing testimony to the excellence of the school, and kindling a worthy emulation in the bosoms of the scholars.

"Yes," said the old schoolmaster, observing that her attention was caught by these latter specimens, "that's beautiful writing, my dear."

"Very, sir," replied the child, modestly, "is it yours?"

"Mine!" he returned, taking out his spectacles and putting them on, to have a better view of the triumphs so dear to his heart. "*I* couldn't write like that, now-a-days. No. They're all done by one hand; a little hand it is, not so old as your's, but a very clever one."

As the schoolmaster said this, he saw that a small blot of ink had been thrown on one of the copies, so he took a penknife from his pocket, and going up to the wall, carefully scratched it out. When he had finished, he walked slowly backward from the writing, admiring it as one might contemplate a beautiful picture, but with something of sadness in his voice and manner which quite touched the child, though she was unacquainted with its cause.

"A little hand, indeed," said the poor schoolmaster. "Far beyond all his companions, in his learning and his sports too, how did he ever come to be so fond of me! That I should love him is no wonder, but that he should love me—" and there the schoolmaster stopped, and took off his spectacles to wipe them, as though they had grown dim.

"I hope there is nothing the matter, sir," said Nell, anxiously.

"Not much, my dear," returned the schoolmaster. "I hoped to have seen him on the green to-night. He was always foremost among them. But he'll be there to-morrow."

"Has he been ill?" asked the child, with a child's quick sympathy.

"Not very. They said he was wandering in his head yesterday, dear boy, and so they said the day before. But that's a part of that kind of disorder; it's not a bad sign—not at all a bad sign."

The child was silent. He walked to the door, and looked wistfully out. The shadows of night were gathering, and all was still.

"If he could lean upon somebody's arm, he would come to me, I know," he said, returning into the room. "He always came into the garden to say good night. But perhaps his illness has only just taken a favourable turn, and it's too late for him to come out, for it's very damp and there's a heavy dew. It's much better he shouldn't come to-night."

The schoolmaster lighted a candle, fastened the window-shutter, and closed the door. But after he had done this, and sat silent a little time, he took down his hat, and said he would go and satisfy himself, if Nell would sit up till he returned. The child readily complied, and he went out.

She sat there half-an-hour or more, feeling the place very strange and lonely, for she had prevailed upon the old man to go to bed, and there was nothing to be heard but the ticking of an old clock, and the whistling of the wind among the trees. When he returned, he took his seat in the chimney-corner, but remained silent for a long time. At length he turned to her, and speaking very gently, hoped she would say a prayer that night for a sick child.

"My favourite scholar!" said the poor schoolmaster, smoking a pipe he had forgotten to light, and looking mournfully round upon the walls. "It is a little hand to have done all that, and waste away with sickness. It is a very, very little hand!"

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

After a sound night's rest in a chamber in the thatched roof, in which it seemed the sexton had for some years been a lodger, but which he had lately deserted for a wife and a cottage of his own, the child rose early in the morning and descended to the room where she had supped last night. As the schoolmaster had already left his bed and gone out, she bestirred herself to make it neat and comfortable, and had just finished its arrangement when the kind host returned.

He thanked her many times, and said that the old dame who usually did such offices for him had gone to nurse the little scholar whom he had told her of. The child asked how he was, and hoped he was better.

"No," rejoined the schoolmaster shaking his head sorrowfully, "no better. They even say he is worse."

"I am very sorry for that, sir," said the child.

The poor schoolmaster appeared to be gratified by her earnest manner, but yet rendered more uneasy by it, for he added hastily that anxious people often magnified an evil and thought it greater than it was; "for my part," he said, in his quiet, patient way, "I hope it's not so. I don't think he can be worse."

The child asked his leave to prepare breakfast, and her grandfather coming down stairs they all three partook of it together. While the meal was in progress, the host remarked that the old man seemed much fatigued, and evidently stood in need of rest.

"If the journey you have before you is a long one," he said, "and don't press you for one day, you're very welcome to pass another night here. I should really be glad if you would, friend."

He saw that the old man looked at Nell, uncertain whether to accept or decline his offer; and added,

"I shall be glad to have your young companion with me for one day. If you can do a charity to a lone man, and rest yourself at the same time, do so. If you must proceed upon your journey, I wish you well through it, and will walk a little way with you before school begins."

"What are we to do, Nell," said the old man irresolutely, "say what we're to do, dear."

It required no great persuasion to induce the child to answer that they had better accept the invitation and remain. She was happy to show her gratitude to the kind schoolmaster by busying herself in the performance of such household duties as his little cottage stood in need of. When these were done, she took some needle-work from her basket, and sat herself down upon a stool beside the lattice, where the honeysuckle and woodbine entwined their tender stems, and stealing into the room filled it with their delicious breath. Her grandfather was basking in the sun outside, breathing the perfume of the flowers, and idly watching the clouds as they floated on before the light summer wind.

As the schoolmaster, after arranging the two forms in due order, took his seat behind his desk and made other preparations for school, the child was apprehensive that she might be in the way, and offered to withdraw to her little bed-room. But this he would not allow, and as he seemed pleased to have her there, she remained, busying herself with her work.

"Have you many scholars, sir?" she asked.

The poor schoolmaster shook his head, and said that they barely filled the two forms.

"Are the others clever, sir?" asked the child, glancing at the trophies on the wall

"Good boys," returned the schoolmaster, "good boys enough, my dear, but they'll never do like that."

A small white-headed boy with a sunburnt face appeared at the door while he was speaking, and stopping there to make a rustic bow, came in and took his seat upon one of the forms. The white-headed boy then put an open book, astonishingly dog's-eared, upon his knees, and thrusting his hands into his pockets began counting the marbles with which they were filled; displaying in the expression of his face a remarkable capacity of totally abstracting his mind from the spelling on which his eyes were fixed. Soon afterwards another white-headed little boy came straggling in, and after him a red-headed lad, and after

him two more with white heads, and then one with a flaxen poll, and so on until the forms were occupied by a dozen boys or thereabouts, with heads of every colour but grey, and ranging in their ages from four years old to fourteen years or more; for the legs of the youngest were a long way from the floor when he sat upon the form, and the eldest was a heavy good-tempered foolish fellow, about a half a head taller than the schoolmaster.

At the top of the first form—the post of honour in the school—was the vacant place of the little sick scholar, and at the head of the row of pegs on which those who came in hats or caps were wont to hang them up, one was empty. No boy attempted to violate the sanctity of seat or peg, but many a one looked from the empty spaces to the schoolmaster, and whispered his idle neighbour behind his hand.

Then began the hum of conning over lessons and getting them by heart, the whispered jest and stealthy game, and all the noise and drawl of school; and in the midst of the din sat the poor schoolmaster, the very image of meekness and simplicity, vainly attempting to fix his mind upon the duties of the day, and to forget his little friend. But the tedium of his office reminded him more strongly of the willing scholar, and his thoughts were rambling from his pupils—it was plain.

None knew this better than the idlest boys, who, growing bolder with impunity, waxed louder and more daring; playing odd-or-even under the master's eye, eating apples openly and without rebuke, pinching each other in sport or malice without the least reserve, and cutting their autographs in the very legs of his desk. The puzzled dunce, who stood beside it to say his lesson out of book, looked no longer at the ceiling for forgotten words, but drew closer to the master's elbow, and boldly cast his eye upon the page; the wag of the little troop squinted and made grimaces (at the smallest boy of course), holding no book before his face, and his approving audience knew no constraint in their delight. If the master did chance to rouse himself and seem alive to what was going on, the noise subsided for a moment and no eyes met his but wore a studious and a deeply humble look; but the instant he relapsed again, it broke out afresh, and ten times louder than before.

Oh! how some of those idle fellows longed to be outside, and how they looked at the open door and window, as if they half meditated rushing violently out, plunging into the woods, and being wild boys and savages from that time forth. Wha.

rebellious thoughts of the cool river, and some shady bathing-place beneath willow trees, with branches dipping in the water, kept tempting and urging that sturdy boy, who, with his shirt-collar unbuttoned and flung back as far as it could go, sat fanning his flushed face with a spelling-book, wishing himself a whale, or a tittlebat, or a fly, or anything but a boy at school on that hot, broiling day! Heat! ask that other boy, whose seat being nearest to the door, gave him opportunities of gliding out into the garden and driving his companions to madness by dipping his face into the bucket of the well and then rolling on the grass—ask him if there were ever such a day as that, when even the bees were diving deep down into the cups of flowers and stopping there, as if they had made up their minds to retire from business, and be manufacturers of honey no more. The day was made for laziness, and lying on one's back in green places, and staring at the sky till its brightness forced one to shut one's eyes and go to sleep; and was this a time to be poring over musty books in a dark room, slighted by the very sun itself? Monstrous!

Nell sat by the window occupied with her work, but attentive still to all that passed, though sometimes rather timid of the boisterous boys. The lessons over, writing-time began; and there being but one desk and that the master's, each boy sat at it in turn and laboured at his crooked copy, while the master walked about. This was a quieter time; for he would come and look over the writer's shoulder, and tell him mildly to observe how such a letter was turned in such a copy on the wall, praise such an up-stroke here and such a down-stroke there, and bid him take it for his model. Then he would stop and tell them what the sick child had said last night, and how he had longed to be among them once again; and such was the poor schoolmaster's gentle and affectionate manner, that the boys seemed quite remorseful that they had worried him so much, and were absolutely quiet; eating no apples, cutting no names, inflicting no pinches, and making no grimaces, for full two minutes afterwards.

"I think, boys," said the schoolmaster, when the clock struck twelve, "that I shall give you an extra half-holiday this afternoon."

At this intelligence, the boys, led on and headed by the tall boy, raised a great shout, in the midst of which the master was seen to speak, but could not be heard. As he held up his hand, however, in token of his wish that they should be silent, they were considerate enough to leave off, as soon as the longest-winded among them were quite out of breath.

"You must promise me first," said the schoolmaster, "that you'll not be noisy, or at least, if you are, that you'll go away and be so—away out of the village, I mean —I'm sure you wouldn't disturb your old playmate and companion."

There was a general murmur, (and perhaps a very sincere one, for they were but boys) in the negative; and the tall boy, perhaps as sincerely as any of them, called those about him to witness that he had only shouted in a whisper.

"Then pray don't forget, there's my dear scholars," said the schoolmaster, "what I have asked you, and do it as a favour to me. Be as happy as you can, and don't be unmindful that you are blessed with health. Good bye all!"

"Thank'ee sir," and "good bye sir," were said a great many times in a variety of voices, and the boys went out very slowly and softly. But there was the sun shining and there were the birds singing, as the sun only shines and the birds only sing on holidays and half-holidays; there were the trees waving to all free boys to climb and nestle among their leafy branches; the hay, entreating them to come and scatter it to the pure air; the green corn, gently beckoning towards wood and stream; the smooth ground, rendered smoother still by blending lights and shadows, inviting to runs and leaps, and long walks God knows whither. It was more than boy could bear, and with a joyous whoop the whole cluster took to their heels and spread themselves about, shouting and laughing as they went.

"It's natural, thank Heaven!" said the poor schoolmaster looking after them. "I am very glad they didn't mind me!"

It is difficult, however, to please everybody, as most of us would have discovered, even without the fable which bears that moral; and in the course of the afternoon several mothers and aunts of pupils looked in to express their entire disapproval of the schoolmaster's proceeding. A few confined themselves to hints, such as politely inquiring what red-letter day or saint's day the almanac said it was; a few (these were the profound village politicians) argued that it was a slight to the throne and an affront to church and state, and savoured of revolutionary principles, to grant a half holiday upon any lighter occasion than the birthday of the Monarch; but the majority expressed their displeasure on private grounds and in plain terms, arguing that to put the pupils on this short allowance of learning was nothing but an act of down-

right robbery and fraud: and one old lady, finding that she could not inflame or irritate the peaceable schoolmaster by talking to him, bounced out of his house and talked at him for half-an-hour outside his own window, to another old lady, saying that of course he would deduct this half-holiday from his weekly charge, or of course he would naturally expect to have an opposition started against him; there was no want of idle chaps in that neighbourhood (here the old lady raised her voice), and some chaps who were too idle even to be schoolmasters, might soon find that there were other chaps put over their heads, and so she would have them take care, and look pretty sharp about them. But all these taunts and vexations failed to elicit one word from the meek schoolmaster, who sat with the child by his side,—a little more dejected perhaps, but quite silent and uncomplaining.

Towards night an old woman came tottering up the garden as speedily as she could, and meeting the schoolmaster at the door, said he was to go to Dame West's directly, and had best run on before her. He and the child were on the point of going out together for a walk, and without relinquishing her hand, the schoolmaster hurried away, leaving the messenger to follow as she might.

They stopped at a cottage-door, and the schoolmaster knocked softly at it with his hand. It was opened without loss of time. They entered a room where a little group of women were gathered about one, older than the rest, who was crying very bitterly, and sat wringing her hands and rocking herself to and fro.

"Oh dame!" said the schoolmaster, drawing near her chair, "is it so bad as this?"

"He 's going fast," cried the old woman; "my grandson 's dying. It 's all along of you. You shouldn't see him now, but for his being so earnest on it. This is what his learning has brought him to. Oh dear, dear, dear, what can I do!"

"Do not say that I am in any fault," urged the gentle schoolmaster. "I am not hurt, dame. No, no. You are in great distress of mind, and don't mean what you say. I am sure you don't."

"I do," returned the old woman, "I mean it all. If he hadn't been poring over his books out of fear of you, he would have been well and merry now, I know he would."

The schoolmaster looked round upon the other women as if to entreat some one among them to say a kind word for him, but they shook their heads, and murmured to each other that they never thought there was much good in learning, and that this convinced them. Without saying a word in reply, or giving them a look of reproach he followed the old woman who had summoned him (and who had now rejoined them) into another room, where his infant friend, half dressed, lay stretched upon a bed.

He was a very young boy; quite a little child. His hair still hung in curls about his face, and his eyes were very bright; but their light was of Heaven, not earth. The schoolmaster took a seat beside him, and stooping over the pillow, whispered his name. The boy sprung up, stroked his face with his hand, and threw his wasted arms around his neck, crying out that he was his dear kind friend.

"I hope I always was. I meant to be, God knows," said the poor schoolmaster.

"Who is that?" said the boy, seeing Nell. "I am afraid to kiss her, lest I should make her ill. Ask her to shake hands with me."

The sobbing child came closer up, and took the little languid hand in hers. Releasing his again after a time, the sick boy laid him gently down.

"You remember the garden, Harry," whispered the schoolmaster, anxious to rouse him, for a dulness seemed gathering upon the child, "and how pleasant it used to be in the evening time? You must make haste to visit it again, for I think the very flowers have missed you, and are less gay than they used to be. You will come soon, my dear, very soon now,—won't you?"

The boy smiled faintly—so very, very faintly—and put his hand upon his friend's grey head. He moved his lips too, but no voice came from them; no, not a sound.

In the silence that ensued, the hum of distant voices borne upon the evening air came floating through the open window "What 's that?" said the sick child, opening his eyes.

"The boys at play upon the green."

He took a handkerchief from his pillow and tried to wave it above his head. But the feeble arm dropped powerless down.

"Shall I do it?" said the schoolmaster.

"Please wave it at the window," was the faint reply. "Tie it to the lattice. Some of them may see it there. Perhaps they 'll think of me, and look this way."

He raised his head, and glanced from the fluttering signal to his idle bat, that lay with slate and book and other boyish property upon a table in the room. And then he laid him softly down once more, and asked if the little girl were there, for he could not see her.

She stepped forward, and pressed the passive hand that lay upon the coverlet.

The two old friends and companions—for such they were, though they were man and child—held each other in a long embrace, and then the little scholar turned his face towards the wall, and fell asleep.

The poor schoolmaster sat in the same place, holding the small cold hand in his, and chafing it. It was but the hand of a dead child. He felt that; and yet he chafed it still, and could not lay it down.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

ALMOST broken-hearted, Nell withdrew with the schoolmaster from the bedside and returned to his cottage. In the midst of her grief and tears she was yet careful to conceal their real cause from the old man, for the dead boy had been a grandchild, and left but one aged relative to mourn his premature decay.

She stole away to bed as quickly as she could, and when she was alone, gave free vent to the sorrow with which her breast was overcharged. But the sad scene she had witnessed, was not without its lesson of content and gratitude; of content with the lot which left her health and freedom; and gratitude that she was spared to the one relative and friend she loved, and to live and move in a beautiful world, when so many young creatures—as young and full of hope as she—were stricken down and gathered to their graves. How many of the mounds in that old churchyard where she had lately strayed, grew green above the graves of children! And though she thought as a child herself, and did not perhaps sufficiently consider to what a bright and happy existence those who die young are borne, and how in death they lose the pain of seeing others die around them, bearing to the tomb some strong affection of their hearts (which makes the old die many times in one long life), still she thought wisely enough, to draw a plain and easy moral from what she had seen that night, and to store it, deep in her mind.

Her dreams were of the little scholar: not coffined and covered up, but mingling with angels, and smiling happily. The sun darting his cheerful rays into the room, awoke her; and now there remained but to take leave of the poor schoolmaster, and wander forth once more.

By the time they were ready to depart, school had begun. In the darkened room, the din of yesterday was going on again; a little sobered and softened down, perhaps, but only a very little, if at all. The schoolmaster rose from his desk and walked with them to the gate.

It was with a trembling and reluctant hand, that the child held out to him the money which the lady had given her at the races for her flowers: faltering in her thanks as she thought how small the sum was, and blushing as she offered it. But he bade her put it up, and stooping to kiss her cheek, turned back into his house.

They had not gone half-a-dozen paces when he was at the door again; the old man retraced his steps to shake hands, and the child did the same.

"Good fortune and happiness go with you!" said the poor schoolmaster. "I am quite a solitary man now. If you ever pass this way again, you'll not forget the little village school."

"We shall never forget it, sir," rejoined Nell; "nor ever forget to be grateful for your kindness to us."

"I have heard such words from the lips of children very often," said the schoolmaster, shaking his head, and smiling thoughtfully, "but they were soon forgotten. I had attached one young friend to me, the better friend for being young—but that's over—God bless you!"

They bade him farewell very many times, and turned away, walking slowly and often looking back, until they could see him no more. At length they had left the village far behind, and even lost sight of the smoke among the trees. They trudged onward now, at a quicker pace, resolving to keep the main road, and go wherever it might lead them.

But main roads stretch a long, long way. With the exception of two or three inconsiderable clusters of cottages which they passed, without stopping, and one lonely road-side public-house where they had some bread and cheese, this highway had led them to nothing—late in the afternoon—and still lengthened out, far in the distance, the same dull, tedious, winding course, that they had been pursuing all day. As they had no resource, however, but to go forward, they still kept on, though at a much slower pace, being weary and fatigued.

The afternoon had worn away into a beautiful evening, when they arrived at a point where the road made a sharp turn and struck across a common. On the border of this common, and close to the hedge which divided it from the cultivated fields a caravan was drawn up to rest; upon which, by reason of its situation, they came so suddenly that they could not have avoided it if they would.

It was not a shabby, dingy, dusty cart, but a smart little house upon wheels, with white dimity curtains festooning the windows, and window-shutters of green picked out with panels of a staring red, in which happily-contrasted colours the whole concern shone brilliant. Neither was it a poor caravan drawn by a single donkey or emaciated horse, for a pair of horses in pretty good condition were released from the shafts and grazing on the frouzy grass. Neither was it a gipsy caravan, for at the open door (graced with a bright brass knocker) sat a christian lady, stout and comfortable to look upon, who wore a large bonnet trembling with bows. And that it was not an unprovided or destitute caravan was clear from this lady's occupation, which was the very pleasant one of taking tea. The tea-things, including a bottle of rather suspicious character and a cold knuckle of ham were set forth upon a drum, covered with a white napkin; and there, as if at the most convenient round-table in all the world, sat this roving lady, taking her tea and enjoying the prospect.

It happened that at that moment the lady of the caravan had her cup (which, that everything about her might be of a stout and comfortable kind, was a breakfast cup,) to her lips, and that having her eyes lifted to the sky in her enjoyment of the full flavour of the tea, not unmingled possibly with just the slightest dash or gleam of something out of the suspicious bottle—but this is mere speculation and not distinct matter of history—it happened that being thus agreeably engaged, she did not see the travellers when they first came up. It was not until she was in the act of setting down the cup, and drawing a long breath after the exertion of causing its contents to disappear, that the lady of the caravan beheld an old man and a young child walking slowly by, and glancing at her proceedings with eyes of modest but hungry admiration.

"Hey!" cried the lady of the caravan.

scooping the crumbs out of her lap and swallowing the same before wiping her lips. "Yes, to be sure.—Who won the Helter-Skelter Plate, child?"

"Won what, ma'am?" asked Nell.

"The Helter-Skelter Plate at the races, child,—the plate that was run for on the second day."

"On the second day, ma'am?"

"Second day! Yes, second day," repeated the lady with an air of impatience. "Can't you say who won the Helter-Skelter Plate when you're asked the question civilly?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Don't know!" repeated the lady of the caravan; "why, you were there. I saw you with my own eyes."

Nell was not a little alarmed to hear this, supposing that the lady might be intimately acquainted with the firm of Short & Codlin; but what followed tended to re-assure her.

"And very sorry I was," said the lady of the caravan, "to see you in company with a Punch; a low, practical, wulgar wretch, that people should scorn to look at."

"I was not there by choice," returned the child; "we didn't know our way, and the two men were very kind to us, and let us travel with them. Do you—do you know them, ma'am?"

"Know 'em, child!" cried the lady of the caravan in a sort of shriek. "Know *them!* But you're young and inexperienced, and that's your excuse for asking sich a question. Do I look as if I know'd 'em?—does the caravan look as if *it* know'd 'em?"

"No, ma'am, no," said the child, fearing she had committed some grievous fault. "I beg your pardon."

It was granted immediately, though the lady still appeared much ruffled and discomposed by the degrading supposition. The child then explained that they had left the races on the first day, and were travelling to the next town on that road, where they purposed to spend the night. As the countenance of the stout lady began to clear up, she ventured to inquire how far it was. The reply—which the stout lady did not come to, until she had thoroughly explained that she went to the races on the first day in a gig, and as an expedition of pleasure, and that her presence there had no connexion with any matters of business or profit—was, that the town was eight miles off.

This discouraging information a little dashed the child, who could scarcely repress a tear as she glanced along the darkening road. Her grandfather made no complaint, but he sighed heavily as he leaned upon his staff, and vainly tried to pierce the dusty distance.

The lady of the caravan was in the act of gathering her tea equipage together preparatory to clearing the table, but noting the child's anxious manner she hesitated and stopped. The child curtsied, thanked her for her information, and, giving her hand to the old man, had already got some fifty yards or so, away, when the lady of the caravan called to her to return.

"Come nearer, nearer still"—said she, beckoning to her to ascend the steps. "Are you hungry, child?"

"Not very, but we are tired, and it's—it *is* a long way"—

"Well, hungry or not, you had better have some tea," rejoined her new acquaintance. "I suppose you are agreeable to that, old gentleman?"

The grandfather humbly pulled off his hat and thanked her. The lady of the caravan then bade him come up the steps likewise; but the drum proving an inconvenient table for two, they descended again, and sat upon the grass, where she handed down to them the tea-tray, the bread and butter, the knuckle of ham, and in short everything of which she had partaken herself, except the bottle, which she had already embraced an opportunity of slipping into her pocket.

"Set 'em out near the hind wheels, child, that's the best place"—said their friend, superintending the arrangements from above. "Now hand up the teapot for a little more hot water, and a pinch of fresh tea, and then both of you eat and drink as much as you can, and don't spare anything; that's all I ask of you."

They might perhaps have carried out the lady's wish, if it had been less freely expressed, or even if it had not been expressed at all. But as this direction relieved them from any shadow of delicacy or uneasiness, they made a hearty meal and enjoyed it to the utmost.

While they were thus engaged, the lady of the caravan alighted on the earth, and with her hands clasped behind her, and her large bonnet trembling excessively, walked up and down in a measured tread and very stately manner, surveying the caravan from time to time with an air of calm delight, and deriving particular gratification from the red panels and the brass knocker. When she had taken this gentle exercise for some time, she sat down upon the steps and called "George;" whereupon a man in a carter's frock, who had been so shrouded in a hedge up to this time as to

see everything that passed without being seen himself, parted the twigs that concealed him, and appeared in a sitting attitude, supporting on his legs a baking-dish and a half-gallon stone bottle, and bearing in his right hand a knife, and in his left a fork.

"Yes, Missus,"—said George.

"How did you find the cold pie, George?"

"It warn't amiss, mum."

"And the beer," said the lady of the caravan, with an appearance of being more interested in this question than the last; "is it passable, George?"

"It's more flatterer than it might be," George returned; "but it an't so bad for all that."

To set the mind of his mistress at rest, he took a sip (amounting in quantity to a pint or thereabouts) from the stone bottle, and then smacked his lips, winked his eye, and nodded his head. No doubt with the same amiable desire, he immediately resumed his knife and fork, as a practical assurance that the beer had wrought no bad effect upon his appetite.

The lady of the caravan looked on approvingly for some time, and then said,

"Have you nearly finished?"

"Wery nigh, mum." And indeed, after scraping the dish all round with his knife and carrying the choice brown morsels to his mouth, and after taking such a scientific pull at the stone bottle that, by degrees almost imperceptible to the sight, his head went further and further back until he lay nearly at his full length upon the ground, this gentleman declared himself quite disengaged, and came forth from his retreat.

"I hope I haven't hurried you, George," said his mistress, who appeared to have a great sympathy with his late pursuit.

"If you have," returned the follower, wisely reserving himself for any favourable contingency that might occur, "we must make up for it next time, that's all."

"We are not a heavy load, George?"

"That's always what the ladies say," replied the man, looking a long way round, as if he were appealing to Nature in general against such monstrous propositions. "If you see a woman a driving, you'll always perceive that she never will keep her whip still; the horse can't go fast enough for her. If cattle have got their proper load, you never can persuade a woman that they'll not bear something more. What is the cause of this here?"

"Would these two travellers make much difference to the horses, if we took them with us?" asked his mistress, offering no reply to the philosophical inquiry, and pointing to Nell and the old man, who were painfully preparing to resume their journey on foot.

"They'd make a difference, in course," said George, doggedly.

"Would they make much difference?" repeated his mistress. "They can't be very heavy."

"The weight o' the pair, mum," said George, eyeing them with the look of a man who was calculating within half an ounce or so, "would be a trifle under that of Oliver Cromwell."

Nell was very much surprised that the man should be so accurately acquainted with the weight of one whom she had read of in books as having lived considerably before their time, but speedily forgot the subject in the joy of hearing that they were to go forward in the caravan, for which she thanked its lady with unaffected earnestness. She helped with great readiness and alacrity to put away the tea-things and other matters that were lying about, and, the horses being by that time harnessed, mounted into the vehicle, followed by her delighted grandfather. Their patroness then shut the door and sat herself down by her drum at an open window; and, the steps being struck by George and stowed under the carriage, away they went, with a great noise of flapping and creaking and straining; and the bright brass knocker, which nobody ever knocked at, knocking one perpetual double knock of its own accord as they jolted heavily along.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

When they had travelled slowly forward for some short distance, Nell ventured to steal a look round the caravan and to observe it more closely. One half of it—that moiety in which the comfortable proprietress was then seated — was carpeted, and so partitioned off at the further end as to accommodate a sleeping-place, constructed after the fashion of a berth on board ship, which was shaded, like the little windows, with fair white curtains, and looked comfortable enough, though by what kind of gymnastic exercise the lady of the caravan ever contrived to get into it, was an unfathomable mystery. The other half served for a kitchen, and was fitted up with a stove whose small chimney passed through the roof. It held also a closet or larder, several chests, a great pitcher of water, and a few cooking utensils and articles of crockery. These latter necessaries hung upon the walls, which, in that portion of the establishment devoted to the lady of the caravan, were ornamented with such gayer and lighter decorations as a triangle and a couple of well-thumbed tambourines.

The lady of the caravan sat at one window in all the pride and poetry of the musical instruments, and little Nell and her grandfather sat at the other in all the humility of the kettle and saucepans, while the machine jogged on and shifted the darkening prospect very slowly. At first the two travellers spoke little, and only in whispers, but as they grew more familiar with the place they ventured to converse with greater freedom, and talked about the country through which they were passing, and the different objects that presented themselves, until the old man fell asleep; which the lady of the caravan observing, invited Nell to come and sit beside her.

"Well, child," she said, "how do you like this way of travelling?"

Nell replied that she thought it was very pleasant indeed, to which the lady assented in the case of people who had their spirits. For herself, she said, she was troubled with a lowness in that respect which required a constant stimulant; though whether the aforesaid stimulant was derived from the suspicious bottle of which mention has been already made, or from other sources, she did not say.

"That's the happiness of you young people," she continued. "You don't know what it is to be low in your feelings. You always have your appetites too, and what a comfort that is!"

Nell thought that she could sometimes dispense with her own appetite very conveniently; and thought, moreover, that there was nothing either in the lady's personal appearance or in her manner of taking tea, to lead to the conclusion that her natural relish for meat and drink had at all failed her. She silently assented, however, as in duty bound, to what the lady had said, and waited until she should speak again.

Instead of speaking, however, she sat looking at the child for a long time in silence, and then getting up, brought out from a corner a large roll of canvass about a yard in width, which she laid upon the floor and spread open with her foot until it nearly reached from one end of the caravan to the other.

"There child," she said, "read that."

Nell walked down it, and read aloud, in enormous black letters, the inscription "Jarley's Wax-Work."

"Read it again," said the lady, complacently.

"Jarley's Wax-Work," repeated Nell.

"That's me," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Jarley."

Giving the child an encouraging look, intended to reassure her and let her know, that, although she stood in the presence of the original Jarley, she must not allow herself to be utterly overwhelmed and borne down, the lady of the caravan unfolded another scroll, whereon was the inscription, "One hundred figures the full size of life," and then another scroll on which was written, "The only stupendous collection of real wax-work in the world," and then several smaller scrolls with such inscriptions as "Now exhibiting within"—"The genuine and only Jarley"—"Jarley's unrivalled collection" — "Jarley is the delight of the Nobility and Gentry"—"The Royal Family are the patrons of Jarley." When she had exhibited these leviathans of public announcement to the astonished child, she brought forth specimens of the lesser fry in the shape of hand-bills, some of which were couched in the form of

parodies on popular melodies, as "Believe me if all Jarley's wax-work so rare"—"I saw thy show in youthful prime"—"Over the water to Jarley;" while to consult all tastes, others were composed with a view to the lighter and more facetious spirits, as a parody on the favourite air of "If I had a donkey," beginning

> If I know'd a donkey wot would'nt go
> To see Mrs. Jarley's wax-work show,
> Do you think I'd acknowledge him? Oh, no, no!
> Then run to Jarley's—

besides several compositions in prose, purporting to be dialogues between the Emperor of China and an oyster, or the Archbishop of Canterbury and a dissenter on the subject of church-rates, but all having the same moral, namely, that the reader must make haste to Jarley's, and that children and servants were admitted at half-price. When she had brought all these testimonials of her important position in society to bear upon her young companion, Mrs. Jarley rolled them up, and having put them carefully away, sat down again, and looked at the child in triumph.

"Never go into the company of a filthy Punch any more," said Mrs. Jarley, "after this."

"I never saw any wax-work ma'am," said Nell. "Is it funnier than Punch?"

"Funnier!" said Mrs. Jarley in a shrill voice. "It is not funny at all."

"Oh!" said Nell with all possible humility.

"It isn't funny at all," repeated Mrs. Jarley. "It's calm and—what's that word again—critical?—no—classical, that's it—its calm and classical. No low beatings and knockings about, no jokings and squeakings like your precious Punches, but always the same, with a constantly unchanging air of coldness and gentility; and so like life, that if wax-work only spoke and walked about, you would hardly know the difference. I won't go so far as to say that, as it is, I've seen wax-work quite like life, but I've certainly seen some life that was exactly like wax-work."

"Is it here, ma'am?" asked Nell, whose curiosity was awakened by this description.

"Is what here, child?"

"The wax-work, ma'am?"

"Why, bless you, child, what are you thinking of?—how could such a collection be here, where you see everything except the inside of one little cupboard and a few boxes? It's gone on in the other wans, to the assembly-rooms, and there it'll be exhibited the day after to-morrow. You are going to the same town, and you'll see it, I dare say. It's natural to expect that you'll see it, and I've no doubt you will. I suppose you couldn't stop away if you was to try ever so much."

"I shall not be in the town. I think, ma'am," said the child.

"Not there!" cried Mrs. Jarley. "Then where will you be?"

"I—I—don't quite know. I am not certain."

"You don't mean to say that you're travelling about the country without knowing where you're going to?" said the lady of the caravan. "What curious people you are! What line are you in? You looked to me at the races, child, as if you were quite out of your element, and had got there by accident."

"We were there quite by accident," returned Nell, confused by this abrupt questioning. "We are poor people, ma'am, and are only wandering about. We have nothing to do;—I wish we had."

"You amaze me more and more," said Mrs. Jarley, after remaining for some time as mute as one of her own figures. "Why, what do you call yourselves? Not beggars?"

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't know what else we are," returned the child.

"Lord bless me!" said the lady of the caravan: "I never heard of such a thing! Who'd have thought it!"

She remained so long silent after this exclamation, that Nell feared she felt her having been induced to bestow her protection and conversation upon one so poor, to be an outrage upon her dignity that nothing could repair. This persuasion was rather confirmed than otherwise by the tone in which she at length broke silence and said,

"And yet you can read; and write, too, I shouldn't wonder?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the child, fearful of giving new offence by the confession.

"Well, and what a thing that is!" returned Mrs. Jarley. "*I* can't."

Nell said, "Indeed," in a tone which might imply, either that she was reasonably surprised to find the genuine and only Jarley, who was the delight of the Nobility and Gentry, and the peculiar pet of the Royal Family, destitute of these familiar arts; or that she presumed so great a lady could scarcely stand in need of such ordinary accomplishments. In whatever way Mrs. Jarley received the response, it did not provoke her to further questioning, or tempt her into any more remarks at the time; for she relapsed into a thoughtful silence, and remained in that state so long that Nell withdrew to the other window

and rejoined her grandfather, who was now awake.

At length the lady of the caravan shook off her fit of meditation, and, summoning the driver to come under the window at which she was seated, held a long conversation with him in a low tone of voice, as if she were asking his advice on an important point, and discussing the pros and cons of some very weighty matter. This conference at length concluded, she drew in her head again, and beckoned Nell to approach.

"And the old gentleman, too," said Mrs. Jarley; "for I want to have a word with him. Do you want a good situation for your grand-daughter, master? If you do, I can put her in the way of getting one. What do you say?"

"I can't leave her," answered the old man. "We can't separate. What would become of me without her?"

"I should have thought you were old enough to take care of yourself, if you ever will be," retorted Mrs. Jarley, sharply.

"But he never will be," said the child, in an earnest whisper. "I fear he never will be again. Pray do not speak harshly to him. We are very thankful to you," she added aloud; "but neither of us could part from the other if all the wealth of the world were halved between us."

Mrs. Jarley was a little disconcerted by this reception of her proposal, and looked at the old man, who tenderly took Nell's hand and detained it in his own, as if she could have very well dispensed with his company or even his earthly existence. After an awkward pause, she thrust her head out of the window again, and had another conference with the driver, upon some point on which they did not seem to agree quite so readily as on their former topic of discussion: but they concluded at last, and she addressed the grandfather again.

"If you're really disposed to employ yourself," said Mrs. Jarley, "there would be plenty for you to do in the way of helping to dust the figures, and take the checks, and so forth. What I want your grand-daughter for, is to point 'em out to the company; they would be soon learnt, and she has a way with her that people wouldn't think unpleasant, though she does come after me; for I've been always accustomed to go round with visitors myself, which I should keep on doing now, only that my spirits make a little ease absolutely necessary. It's not a common offer, bear in mind," said the lady, rising into the tone and manner in which she was accustomed to address her audiences; "it's Jarley's wax-work, remember. The duty's very light and genteel, the company particular select, the exhibition takes place in assembly-rooms, town-halls, large rooms at inns, or auction galleries. There is none of your open-air wagrancy at Jarley's, recollect; there is no tarpaulin and sawdust at Jarley's, remember. Every expectation held out in the handbills is realized to the utmost, and the whole forms an effect of imposing brilliancy hitherto unrivalled in this kingdom. Remember that the price of admission is only sixpence, and that this is an opportunity which may never occur again!"

Descending from the sublime when she had reached this point, to the details of common life, Mrs. Jarley remarked that with reference to salary she could pledge herself to no specific sum until she had sufficiently tested Nell's abilities, and narrowly watched her in the performance of her duties. But board and lodging, both for her and her grandfather, she bound herself to provide, and she furthermore passed her word that the board should always be good in quality and in quantity plentiful.

Nell and her grandfather consulted together, and while they were so engaged, Mrs. Jarley with her hands behind her walked up and down the caravan, as she had walked after tea on the dull earth, with uncommon dignity and self-esteem. Nor will this appear so slight a circumstance as to be unworthy of mention, when it is remembered that the caravan was in uneasy motion all the time, and that none but a person of great natural stateliness and acquired grace could have forborne to stagger.

"Now, child," cried Mrs. Jarley, coming to a halt as Nell turned towards her.

"We are very much obliged to you, ma'am," said Nell, "and thankfully accept your offer."

"And you'll never be sorry for it," returned Mrs. Jarley. "I'm pretty sure of that. So that's all settled, let us have a bit of supper."

In the meanwhile, the caravan blundered on as if it too had been drinking strong beer and was drowsy, and came at last upon the paved streets of a town which were clear of passengers and quiet, for it was by this time near midnight, and the townspeople were all abed. As it was too late an hour to repair to the exhibition room, they turned aside into a piece of waste ground that lay just within the old town gate, and drew up there for the night, near to another caravan, which, notwithstanding that it bore on the lawful panel the great name of Jarley, and was employ

ed besides in conveying from place to place the wax-work which was its country's pride, was designated by a grovelling stamp-office as a "Common Stage Wagon," and numbered too — seven thousand and odd hundred—as though its precious freight were mere flour or coals!

This ill-used machine being empty (for it had deposited its burden at the place of exhibition, and lingered here until its services were again required) was assigned to the old man as his sleeping-place for the night; and within the wooden walls, Nell made him up the best bed she could from the materials at hand. For herself, she was to sleep in Mrs. Jarley's own travelling carriage, as a signal mark of that lady's favour and confidence.

She had taken leave of her grandfather and was returning to the other wagon, when she was tempted by the pleasant coolness of the night to linger for a little while in the air. The moon was shining down upon the old gateway of the town, leaving the low archway very black and dark; and with a mingled sensation of curiosity and fear, she slowly approached the gate, and stood still to look up at it, wondering to see how dark, and grim, and old, and cold, it looked.

There was an empty niche from which some old statue had fallen or been carried away hundreds of years ago, and she was thinking what strange people it must have looked down upon when it stood there, and how many hard struggles might have taken place, and how many murders might have been done, upon that silent spot, when there suddenly emerged from the black shade of the arch, a man. The instant he appeared, she recognized him—who could have failed to recognize, in that instant, the ugly misshapen Quilp!

The street beyond was so narrow, and

the shadow of the houses on one side of the way so deep, that he seemed to have risen out of the earth. But there he was. The child withdrew into a dark corner, and saw him pass close to her. He had a stick in his hand, and when he had got clear of the shadow of the gateway, he leant upon it, looked back—directly, as it seemed, towards where she stood—and beckoned.

To her? oh, no, thank God, not to her; for as she stood, in an extremity of fear, hesitating whether to scream for help, or come from her hiding-place and fly, before he should draw nearer, there issued slowly forth from the arch another figure—that of a boy—who carried on his back a trunk.

"Faster, sirrah!" said Quilp, looking up at the old gateway, and showing in the moonlight like some monstrous image that had come down from its niche, and was

casting a backward glance at its old house, "faster!"

"It's a dreadful heavy load, sir," the boy pleaded. "I've come on very fast, considering."

"*You* have come fast, considering!" retorted Quilp; "you creep, you dog, you crawl, you measure distance like a worm. There are the chimes now, half-past twelve."

He stopped to listen, and then turning upon the boy with a suddenness and ferocity that made him start, asked at what hour that London coach passed the corner of the road. The boy replied, at one.

"Come on then," said Quilp, "or I shall be too late. Faster—do you hear me? Faster."

The boy made all the speed he could, and Quilp led onward, constantly turning back to threaten him, and urge him to greater haste. Nell did not dare to move until they were out of sight and hearing, and then hurried to where she had left her grandfather, feeling as if the very passing of the dwarf so near him must have filled him with alarm and terror. But he was sleeping soundly, and she softly withdrew.

As she was making her way to her own bed, she determined to say nothing of this adventure, as upon whatever errand the dwarf had come (and she feared it must have been in search of them) it was clear by his enquiry about the London coach that he was on his way homeward, and as he had passed through that place, it was but reasonable to suppose that they were safer from his enquiries there, than they could be elsewhere. These reflections did not remove her own alarm, for she had been too much terrified to be easily composed, and felt as if she were hemmed in by a legion of Quilps, and the very air itself were filled with them.

The delight of the Nobility and Gentry and the patronized of Royalty had by some process of self-abridgment known only to herself, got into her travelling bed, where she was snoring peacefully, while the large bonnet, carefully disposed upon the drum, was revealing its glories by the light of a dim lamp that swung from the roof. The child's bed was already made on the floor, and it was a great comfort to her to hear the steps removed as soon as she had entered, and to know that all easy communication between persons outside and the brass knocker was by this means effectually prevented. Certain guttural sounds, too, which from time to time ascended through the floor of the caravan, and a rustling of straw in the same direction, apprised her that the driver was couched upon the ground beneath, and gave her an additional feeling of security.

Notwithstanding these protections, she could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs. Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs. Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel organ all in one, and yet not exactly any of them either. At length, towards break of day, that deep sleep came upon her which succeeds to weariness and over-watching, and which has no consciousness but one of overpowering and irresistible enjoyment.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

Sleep hung upon the eyelids of the child so long, that, when she awoke, Mrs. Jarley was already decorated with her large bonnet, and actively engaged in preparing breakfast. She received Nell's apology for being so late with perfect good-humour, and said that she should not have roused her if she had slept until noon.

"Because it does you good," said the lady of the caravan, "when you're tired, to sleep as long as ever you can, and get the fatigue quite off; and that's another blessing of your time of life—you can sleep so very sound."

"Have you had a bad night, ma'am?" asked Nell.

"I seldom have anything else, child," replied Mrs. Jarley, with the air of a martyr. "I sometimes wonder how I bear it."

Remembering the snores which had proceeded from the cleft in the caravan in which the proprietress of the wax-work passed the night, Nell rather thought she must have been dreaming of lying awake. However, she expressed herself very sorry to hear such a dismal account of her state of health, and shortly afterwards sat down with her grandfather and Mrs. Jarley to breakfast. The meal finished, Nell assisted to wash the cups and saucers, and put them in their proper places, and these household duties performed, Mrs. Jarley

arrayed herself in an exceedingly bright shawl for the purpose of making a progress through the streets of the town.

"The van will come on to bring the boxes," said Mrs. Jarley, "and you had better come in it, child. I am obliged to walk, very much against my will; but the people expect it of me, and public characters can't be their own masters and mistresses in such matters as these. How do I look, child?"

Nell returned a satisfactory reply, and Mrs. Jarley, after sticking a great many pins into various parts of her figure, and making several abortive attempts to obtain a full view of her own back, was at last satisfied with her appearance, and went forth majestically.

The caravan followed at no great distance. As it went jolting through the streets, Nell peeped from the window, curious to see in what kind of place they were, and yet fearful of encountering at every turn the dreaded face of Quilp. It was a pretty large town, with an open square which they were crawling slowly across, and in the middle of which was the Town-Hall, with a clock-tower and a weathercock. There were houses of stone, houses of red brick, houses of yellow brick, houses of lath and plaster; and houses of wood, many of them very old, with withered faces carved upon the beams, and staring down into the street. These had very little winking windows, and low-arched doors, and, in some of the narrower ways, quite overhung the pavement. The streets were very clean, very sunny, very empty, and very dull. A few idle men lounged about the two inns, and the empty market-place, and the tradesmen's doors, and some old people were dozing in chairs outside an almshouse wall; but scarcely any passengers who seemed bent on going anywhere, or to have any object in view, went by; and if perchance some straggler did, his footsteps echoed on the hot bright pavement for minutes afterwards. Nothing seemed to be going on but the clocks, and they had such drowsy faces, such heavy lazy hands, and such cracked voices, that they surely must have been too slow. The very dogs were all asleep, and the flies, drunk with moist sugar in the grocer's shop, forgot their wings and briskness, and baked to death in dusky corners of the window.

Rumbling along with most unwonted noise, the caravan stopped at last at the place of exhibition, where Nell dismounted amidst an admiring group of children, who evidently supposed her to be an important item of the curiosities, and were fully impressed with the belief that her grandfather was a cunning device in wax. The chests were taken out with all convenient despatch, and taken in to be unlocked by Mrs. Jarley, who, attended by George and another man in velveteen shorts and a drab hat ornamented with turnpike tickets, were waiting to dispose their contents (consisting of red festoons and other ornamental devices in upholstery work) to the best advantage in the decoration of the room.

They all got to work without loss of time, and very busy they were. As the stupendous collection were yet concealed by cloths, lest the envious dust should injure their complexions, Nell bestirred herself to assist in the embellishment of the room, in which her grandfather also was of great service. The two men being well used to it, did a great deal in a short time; and Mrs. Jarley served out the tin tacks from a linen pocket like a toll-collector's, which she wore for the purpose, and encouraged her assistants to renewed exertion.

While they were thus employed, a tallish gentleman with a hook nose and black hair, dressed in a military surtout very short and tight in the sleeves, and which had once been frogged and braided all over, but was now sadly shorn of its garniture and quite threadbare — dressed, too, in ancient grey pantaloons fitting tight to the leg, and a pair of pumps in the winter of their existence — looked in at the door, and smiled affably. Mrs. Jarley's back being then towards him, the military gentleman shook his fore-finger as a sign that her myrmidons were not to apprise her of his presence, and stealing up close behind her, tapped her on the neck, and cried playfully — "Boh!"

"What, Mr. Slum!" cried the lady of the wax-work. "Lor! who'd have thought of seeing you here!"

"'Pon my soul and honour," said Mr. Slum, "that's a good remark! 'Pon my soul and honour, that's a wise remark! Who *would* have thought it! George, my faithful feller, how are you?"

George received this advance with a surly indifference, observing that he was well enough for the matter of that, and hammering lustily all the time.

"I came here," said the military gentleman, turning to Mrs. Jarley,—"'pon my soul and honour I hardly know what I came here for. It would puzzle me to tell you, it would by Gad. I wanted a little inspiration, a little freshening up, a little change of ideas, and——'Pon my soul and honour," said the military gentleman, checking himself and looking round the room, "what a devilish classical thing this is! By Gad, it's quite Minervian!"

"It'll look well enough when it comes to be finished," observed Mrs. Jarley.

"Well enough!" said Mr. Slum. "Will you believe me when I say it's the delight of my life to have dabbled in poetry, when I think I've exercised my pen upon this charming theme? By the way—any orders? Is there any little thing I can do for you?"

"It comes so very expensive, sir," replied Mrs. Jarley, "and I really don't think it does much good."

"Hush! No, no!" returned Mr. Slum, elevating his hand. "No fibs. I'll not near it. Don't say it don't do good. Don't say it. I know better!"

"I don't think it does," said Mrs. Jarley.

"Ha, ha!" cried Mr. Slum, "you're giving way, you're coming down. Ask the perfumers, ask the blacking-makers, ask the hatters, ask the old lottery-office-keepers—ask any man among 'em what my poetry has done for him, and mark my words, he blesses the name of Slum. If he's an honest man, he raises his eyes to heaven, and blesses the name of Slum—mark that! You are acquainted with Westminster Abbey, Mrs. Jarley?"

"Yes, surely."

"Then upon my soul and honour, ma'am, you'll find in a certain angle of that dreary pile, called Poet's Corner, a few smaller names than Slum," retorted that gentleman, tapping himself expressively on the forehead, to imply that there was some slight quantity of brains behind it. "I've got a little trifle here, now," said Mr. Slum, taking off his hat, which was full of scraps of paper—"a little trifle here, thrown off in the heat of the moment, which I should say was exactly the thing you wanted, to set this place on fire with. It's an acrostic—the name at this moment is Warren; but the idea's a convertible one, and a positive inspiration for Jarley. Have the acrostic!"

"I suppose it's very dear," said Mrs. Jarley.

"Five shillings," returned Mr. Slum, using his pencil as a tooth-pick. "Cheaper than any prose."

"I couldn't give more than three," said Mrs. Jarley.

"—And six," retorted Slum. "Come. Three-and-six."

Mrs. Jarley was not proof against the poet's insinuating manner, and Mr. Slum entered the order in a small note-book as a three-and-sixpenny one. Mr. Slum then withdrew to alter the acrostic, after taking a most affectionate leave of his patroness, and promising to return, as soon as he possibly could, with a fair copy for the printer.

As his presence had not interfered with or interrupted the preparations, they were now far advanced, and were completed shortly after his departure. When the festoons were all put up as tastily as they might be, the stupendous collection was uncovered, and there were displayed, on a raised platform some two feet from the floor, running round the room, and parted from the rude public by a crimson rope breast high, divers sprightly effigies of celebrated characters, singly and in groups, clad in glittering dresses of various climes and times, and standing more or less unsteadily upon their legs, with their eyes very wide open, and their nostrils very much inflated, and the muscles of their legs and arms very strongly developed, and all their countenances expressing great surprise. All the gentlemen were very pigeon-breasted, and very blue about the beards, and all the ladies were miraculous figures; and all the ladies and all the gentlemen were looking intensely nowhere, and staring with extraordinary earnestness at nothing.

When Nell had exhausted her first raptures at this glorious sight, Mrs. Jarley ordered the room to be cleared of all but herself and the child, and, sitting herself down in an arm-chair in the centre, formally invested her with a willow wand, long used by herself for pointing out the characters, and was at great pains to instruct her in her duty.

"That," said Mrs. Jarley in her exhibition tone, as Nell touched a figure at the beginning of the platform, "is an unfortunate Maid of Honour in the Time of Queen Elizabeth, who died from pricking her finger in consequence of working upon a Sunday. Observe the blood which is trickling from her finger; also the gold-eyed needle of the period, with which she is at work."

All this Nell repeated twice or thrice, pointing to the finger and the needle at the right times, and then passed on to the next.

"That, ladies and gentlemen," said Mrs. Jarley, "is Jasper Packlemerton of atrocious memory, who courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all by tickling the soles of their feet when they was sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue. On being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, he replied yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy, and hoped all Christian husbands would pardon him the offence. Let this be a warning to all young ladies to be particular in the character of the gentlemen of their choice. Observe that his fingers is curled as if in the act of tickling, and that his face is represented

with a wink, as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders."

When Nell knew all about Mr. Packlemerton, and could say it without faltering, Mrs. Jarley passed on to the fat man, and then to the thin man, the tall man, the short man, the old lady who died of dancing at a hundred and thirty-two, the wild boy of the woods, the woman who poisoned fourteen families with pickled walnuts, and other historical characters and interesting but misguided individuals. And so well did Nell profit by her instructions, and so apt was she to remember them, that by the time they had been shut up together for a couple of hours, she was in full possession of the history of the whole establishment, and perfectly competent to the enlightenment of visiters.

Mrs. Jarley was not slow to express her admiration of this happy result, and carried her young friend and pupil to inspect the remaining arrangements within doors, by virtue of which the passage had been already converted into a grove of green baize, hung with the inscriptions she had already seen (Mr. Slum's productions), and a highly-ornamented table placed at the upper end for Mrs. Jarley herself, at which she was to preside and take the money, in company with his majesty King George the Third, Mr. Grimaldi as clown, Mary, Queen of Scots, an anonymous gentleman of the Quaker persuasion, and Mr. Pitt, holding in his hand a correct model of the bill for the imposition of the window-duty. The preparations within doors had not been neglected either; for a nun of great personal attractions was telling her beads on the little portico over the door; and a brigand with the blackest possible head of hair, and the clearest possible complexion, was at that moment going round the town in a cart, consulting the miniature of a lady.

It now only remained that Mr. Slum's compositions should be judiciously distributed; that the pathetic effusions should find their way to all private houses and tradespeople; and that the parody commencing "If I know'd a donkey," should be confined to the taverns, and circulated only among the lawyers' clerks and choice spirits of the place. When this had been done, and Mrs. Jarley had waited upon the boarding-schools in person, with a handbill composed expressly for them, in which it was distinctly proved that wax-work refined the mind, cultivated the taste, and enlarged the sphere of the human understanding, that indefatigable lady sat down to dinner, and drank out of the suspicious bottle to a flourishing campaign.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-NINTH.

UNQUESTIONABLY Mrs. Jarley had an inventive genius. In the midst of the various devices for attracting visiters to the exhibition, little Nell was not forgotten. The light cart in which the Brigand usually made his perambulations being gaily dressed with flags and streamers, and the Brigand placed therein, contemplating the miniature of his beloved as usual, Nell was accommodated with a seat beside him, decorated with artificial flowers, and in this state and ceremony rode slowly through the town every morning, dispersing handbills from a basket, to the sound of drum and trumpet. The beauty of the child, coupled with her gentle and timid bearing, produced quite a sensation in the little country place. The Brigand, heretofore a source of exclusive interest in the streets, became a mere secondary consideration, and to be important only as a part of the show of which she was the chief attraction. Grown-up folks began to be interested in the bright-eyed girl, and some score of little boys fell desperately in love, and constantly left inclosures of nuts and apples, directed in small-text, at the wax-work door.

This desirable impression was not lost upon Mrs. Jarley, who, lest Nell should become too cheap, soon sent the Brigand out alone again, and kept her in the exhibition-room, where she described the figures every half-hour, to the great satisfaction of admiring audiences. And these audiences were of a very superior description, including a great many young ladies' boarding-schools, whose favour Mrs. Jarley had been at great pains to conciliate, by altering the face and costume of Mr. Grimaldi as clown to represent Mr. Lindley Murray, as he appeared when engaged in the composition of his English Grammar, and turning a murderess of great renown into Mrs. Hannah More—both of which likenesses were admitted by Miss Monflathers, who was at the head of the head Boarding and Day Establishment in the town, and who condescended to take a private view with eight chosen young ladies, to be quite startling from their extreme correctness. Mr. Pitt, in a night-cap and bed-gown, and without his boots, represented the poet Cowper with perfect exactness; and Mary, Queen of Scots, in a dark wig, white shirt-collar, and male attire, was such a complete image of Lord Byron, that the young ladies quite screamed when they saw it. Miss Monflathers, however, rebuked this enthusiasm, and took occasion to reprove Mrs. Jarley for not keeping her collection more select, observing that his Lordship had held certain free opinions quite incompatible with wax-work honours, and adding something about a dean and chapter, which Mrs. Jarley did not understand.

Although her duties were sufficiently laborious, Nell found in the lady of the caravan a very kind and considerate person, who had not only a peculiar relish for being comfortable herself, but for making everybody about her comfortable also; which latter taste, it may be remarked, is, even in persons who live in much finer places than caravans, a far more rare and uncommon one than the first, and is not by any means its necessary consequence. As her popularity procured her various little fees from the visiters on which her patroness never demanded any toll, and as her grandfather too was well-treated and useful, she had no cause of anxiety in connexion with the wax-work, beyond that which sprung from her recollection of Quilp, and her fears that he might return and one day suddenly encounter them.

Quilp indeed was a perpetual nightmare to the child, who was constantly haunted by a vision of his ugly face and stunted figure. She slept, for their better security, in the room where the wax-work figures were, and she never retired to this place at night but she tortured herself—she could not help it—with imagining a resemblance in some one or other of their death-like faces, to the dwarf, and this fancy would sometimes so gain upon her that she would almost believe he had removed the figure and stood within the clothes. Then there were so many of them with their great glassy eyes—and, as they stood one behind the other all about her bed, they looked so like living creatures, and yet so unlike in their grim stillness and silence, that she had a kind of terror of them for their own sakes, and would often lie watching their dusky figures until she was obliged to rise and light a candle, or go and sit at the open window and feel a companionship in the bright stars. At these times, she would recall the old house and the window at which she used to sit alone; and then she would think of poor Kit and all his kindness, until the tears came into her eyes, and she would weep and smile together.

Often and anxiously at this silent hour, her thoughts reverted to her grandfather, and she would wonder how much he remembered of their former life, and whether he was ever really mindful of the change in their condition and of their late help-

lessness and destitution. When they were wandering about, she seldom thought of this, but now she could not help considering what would become of them if he fell sick, or her own strength were to fail her. He was very patient and willing, happy to execute any little task, and glad to be of use; but he was in the same listless state, with no prospect of improvement—a mere child—a poor, thoughtless, vacant creature—a harmless fond old man, susceptible of tender love and regard for her, and of pleasant and painful impressions, but alive to nothing more. It made her very sad to know that this was so—so sad to see it, that sometimes when he sat idly by, smiling and nodding to her when she looked round, or when he caressed some little child and carried it to and fro, as he was fond of doing by the hour together, perplexed by its simple questions, yet patient under his own infirmity, and seeming almost conscious of it too, and humbled even before the mind of an infant—so sad it made her to see him thus, that she would burst into tears, and, withdrawing into some secret place, fall down upon her knees and pray that he might be restored.

But the bitterness of her grief was not in beholding him in this condition, when he was at least content and tranquil, nor in her solitary meditations on his altered state, though these were trials for a young heart. Cause for deeper and heavier sorrow was yet to come.

One evening, a holiday night with them, Nell and her grandfather went out to walk. They had been rather closely confined for some days, and the weather being warm, they strolled a long distance. Clear of the town, they took a footpath which struck through some pleasant fields, judging that it would terminate in the road they quitted and enable them to return that way. It made, however, a much wider circuit than they had supposed, and thus they were tempted onward until sunset, when they reached the track of which they were in search, and stopped to rest.

It had been gradually getting overcast, and now the sky was dark and lowering, save where the glory of the departing sun piled up masses of gold and burning fire, decaying embers of which gleamed here and there through the black veil, and shone redly down upon the earth. The wind began to moan in hollow murmurs, as the sun went down carrying glad day elsewhere; and a train of dull clouds coming up against it, menaced thunder and lightning. Large drops of rain soon began to fall, and, as the storm-clouds came sailing onward, others

supplied the void they left behind and spread over all the sky. Then was heard the low rumbling of distant thunder, then the lightning quivered, and then the darkness of an hour seemed to have gathered in an instant.

Fearful of taking shelter beneath a tree or hedge, the old man and the child hurried along the high-road, hoping to find some house in which they could seek a refuge from the storm, which had now burst forth in earnest, and every moment increased in violence. Drenched with the pelting rain, confused by the deafening thunder, and bewildered by the glare of the forked lightning, they would have passed a solitary house without being aware of its vicinity, had not a man, who was standing at the door, called lustily to them to enter.

"Your ears ought to be better than other folks' at any rate, if you make so little of the chance of being struck blind," he said, retreating from the door and shading his eyes with his hands as the jagged lightning came again. "What were you going past for, eh?" he added, as he closed the door and led the way along a passage to a room behind.

"We didn't see the house, sir, till we heard you calling," Nell replied.

"No wonder," said the man, "with this lightning in one's eyes, by-the-by. You had better stand by the fire here, and dry yourselves a bit. You can call for what you like if you want anything. If you don't want anything, you 're not obliged to give an order, don't be afraid of that. This is a public-house, that 's all. The Valiant Soldier is pretty well known hereabouts."

"Is this house called the Valiant Soldier, sir?" asked Nell.

"I thought everybody knew that," replied the landlord. "Where have you come from, if you don't know the Valiant Soldier as well as the church catechism? This is the Valiant Soldier by James Groves,—Jem Groves—honest Jem Groves, as is a man of unblemished moral character, and has a good dry skittle-ground. If any man has got anything to say again Jem Groves, let him say it *to* Jem Groves, and Jem Groves can accommodate him with a customer on any terms from four pound a side to forty."

With these words, the speaker tapped himself on the waistcoat to intimate that he was the Jem Groves so highly eulogized, sparred scientifically at a counterfeit Jem Groves, who was sparring at society in general, from a black frame over the chimney-piece, and applying a half-emptied glass of spirits and water to his lips, drank Jem Groves' health.

The night being warm, there was a large screen drawn across the room, for a barrier against the heat of the fire. It seemed as if somebody on the other side of this scree had been insinuating doubts of Mr. Groves prowess, and had thereby given rise to these egotistical expressions, for Mr. Groves wound up his defiance by giving a loud knock upon it with his knuckles and pausing for a reply from the other side.

"There an't many men," said Mr. Groves, no answer being returned, "who would ventur' to cross Jem Groves under his own roof. There 's only one man, I know, that has nerve enough for that, and that man 's not a hundred miles from here neither. But he 's worth a dozen men, and I let him say of me whatever he likes in consequence,—he knows that."

In return for this complimentary address, a very gruff hoarse voice bade Mr. Groves "hold his noise and light a candle." And the same voice remarked that the same gentleman "need'nt waste his breath in brag, for most people knew pretty well what sort of stuff he was made of."

"Nell, they 're—they 're playing cards," whispered the old man, suddenly interested. "Don't you hear them?"

"Look sharp with that candle," said the voice; "it 's as much as I can do to see the pips on the cards as it is; and get this shutter closed as quick as you can, will you? Your beer will be the worse for tonight's thunder, I expect.—Game. Seven-and sixpence to me, old Isaac. Hand over."

"Do you hear, Nell, do you hear them?" whispered the old man again with increased earnestness, as the money chinked upon the table.

"I haven't seen such a storm as this," said a sharp cracked voice of most disagreeable quality, when a tremendous peal of thunder had died away, "since the night when old Luke Withers won thirteen times running, upon the red. We all said he had the Devil's luck and his own, and as it was the kind of night for the Devil to be out and busy, I suppose he *was* looking over his shoulder, if any body could have seen him."

"Ah!" returned the gruff voice; "for all Luke's winning through thick and thin of late years, I remember the time when he was the unluckiest and unfortunatest of men. He never took a dice-box in his hand, or held a card, but he was plucked, pigeoned, and cleaned out completely."

"Do you hear what he says!" whispered the old man. "Do you hear that, Nell!"

The child saw with astonishment and alarm that his whole appearance had undergone a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his eyes were strained, his teeth set, his breath came short and thick, and the hand he laid upon

her arm trembled so violently that she shook beneath its grasp.

"Bear witness," he muttered, looking upward, "that I always said it; that I knew it, dreamed of it, felt it was the truth, and that it must be so! What money have we, Nell? Come, I saw you with money yesterday. What money have we? Give it to me."

"No, no, let me keep it, grandfather," said the frightened child. "Let us go away from here. Do not mind the rain. Pray, let us go."

"Give it to me, I say," returned the old man fiercely. "Hush, hush, don't cry, Nell. If I spoke sharply, dear, I didn't mean it. It's for thy good. I have wronged thee, Nell, but I will right thee yet, I will indeed. Where is the money?"

"Do not take it," said the child. "Pray, do not take it, dear. For both our sakes let me keep it, or let me throw it away—better let me throw it away, than you take it now. Let us go; do let us go."

"Give me the money," returned the old man, "I must have it. There—there—that's my dear Nell. I'll right thee one day, child, I'll right thee, never fear."

She took from her pocket a little purse. He seized it with the same rapid impatience which had characterized his speech, and hastily made his way to the other side of the screen. It was impossible to restrain him, and the trembling child followed close behind.

The landlord had placed a light upon the table, and was engaged in drawing the curtain of the window. The speakers whom they had heard were two men who had a pack of cards and some silver money between them, while upon the screen itself the games they had played were scored in chalk. The man with the rough voice was a burly fellow of middle age with large black whiskers, broad cheeks, a coarse wide mouth, and bull neck, which was pretty freely displayed as his shirt collar was only confined by a loose red neckerchief. He wore his hat, which was of a brownish-white, and had beside him a thick knotted stick. The other man whom his companion had called Isaac, was of a more slender figure—stooping, and high in the shoulders—with a very ill-favoured face, and a most sinister and villanous squint.

"Now, old gentleman," said Isaac, looking round. "Do you know either of us? This side of the screen is private, sir."

"No offence, I hope" returned the old man.

"But, by G—, sir, there *is* offence," said the other, interrupting him, "when you intrude yourself upon a couple of gentlemen who are particularly engaged."

"I had no intention to offend," said the old man, looking anxiously at the cards. "I thought that—"

"But you had no right to think, sir," retorted the other. "What the devil has a man at your time of life to do with thinking?"

"Now, bully boy," said the stout man, raising his eyes from his cards for the first time, "can't you let him speak?"

The landlord, who had apparently resolved to remain neutral until he knew which side of the question the stout man would espouse, chimed in at this place with "Ah, to be sure, can't you let him speak?"

"Can't I let him speak," sneered Isaac in reply, mimicking as nearly as he could, in his shrill voice, the tones of the landlord. "Yes, I can let him speak, Jemmy Groves."

"Well then, do it, will you?" said the landlord.

Mr. List's squint assumed a portentous character, which seemed to threaten a prolongation of this controversy, when his companion, who had been looking sharply at the old man, put a timely stop to it.

"Who knows," said he, with a cunning look, "but the gentleman may have civilly meant to ask if he might have the honour to take a hand with us!"

"I did mean it," cried the old man. "That is what I mean. That is what I want now!"

"I thought so," returned the same man. "Then who knows but the gentleman, anticipating our objection to play for love, civilly desired to play for money?"

The old man replied by shaking the little purse in his eager hand, and then throwing it down upon the table, and gathering up the cards as a miser would clutch at gold.

"Oh! that indeed," said Isaac; "if that's what the gentleman meant, I beg the gentleman's pardon. Is this the gentleman's little purse? A very pretty little purse. Rather a light purse," added Isaac, throwing it into the air and catching it dexterously; "but enough to amuse a gentleman for half an hour or so."

"We'll make a four-handed game of it, and take in Groves," said the stout man. "Come, Jemmy."

The landlord, who conducted himself like one who was well used to such little parties, approached the table and took his seat. The child, in a perfect agony, drew her grandfather aside, and implored him, even then, to come away.

"Come;—and we may be so happy!"

"We *will* be happy," replied the old man, hastily. "Let me go, Nell. The means of happiness are in the cards and in the dice. We must rise from little winnings to great. There's little to be won here; but great will come in time. I shall but win back my own, and it's all for thee, my darling."

"God help us!" cried the child. "Oh! what hard fortune brought us here!"

"Hush!" rejoined the old man, laying his hand upon her mouth; "fortune will not bear chiding. We must not reproach her, or she shuns us; I have found that out."

"Now, mister," said the stout man, "if you're not coming yourself, give us the cards, will you?"

"I am coming," cried the old man. "Sit thee down, Nell; sit thee down, and look on. Be of good heart, it's all for thee—all—every penny. I don't tell them, no, no, or else they wouldn't play, dreading the chance that such a cause must give me. Look at them. See what they are, and what thou art. Who doubts that we must win!"

"The gentleman has thought better of it, and isn't coming," said Isaac, making as though he would rise from the table. "I'm sorry the gentleman's daunted—nothing venture, nothing have—but the gentleman knows best."

"Why I am ready. You have all been slow but me," said the old man. "I wonder who's more anxious to begin than I!"

As he spoke, he drew a chair to the table; and the other three closing round it at the same time, the game commenced.

The child sat by, and watched its pro-

gress with a troubled mind. Regardless of the run of luck, and mindful only of the desperate passion which had its hold upon her grandfather, losses and gains were to her alike. Exulting in some brief triumph, or cast down by a defeat, there he sat so wild and restless, so feverishly and intensely anxious, so terribly eager, so ravenous for the paltry stakes, that she could have almost better borne to see him dead. And yet she was the innocent cause of all this torture, and he, gambling with such a

savage thirst for gain as the most insatiable gambler never felt, had not one selfish thought!

On the contrary, the other three—knaves and gamesters by their trade—while intent upon their game, were yet as cool and quiet as if every virtue had been centred in their breasts. Sometimes one would look up to smile to another, or to snuff the feeble candle, or to glance at the lightning as it shot through the open window and fluttering curtain, or to listen to some louder peal of thunder than the rest, with a kind of momentary impatience, as if it put him out; but there they sat, with a calm indifference to everything but their cards, perfect philosophers in appearance, and with no greater show of passion or excitement than if they had been made of stone.

The storm had raged for full three hours; the lightning had grown fainter and less frequent; the thunder, from seeming to roll and break above their heads, had gradually died away into a deep hoarse distance; and still the game went on, and still the anxious child was quite forgotten.

CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH.

At length the play came to an end, and Mr. Isaac List rose the only winner. Mat and the landlord bore their losses with professional fortitude. Isaac pocketed his gains with the air of a man who had quite made up his mind to win, all along, and was neither surprised nor pleased.

Nell's little purse was exhausted; but, although it lay empty by his side, and the other players had now risen from the table, the old man sat poring over the cards, dealing them as they had been dealt before, and turning up the different hands to see what each man would have held if they had still been playing. He was quite absorbed in this occupation, when the child drew near and laid her hand upon his shoulder, telling him it was near midnight.

"See the curse of poverty, Nell," he said, pointing to the packs he had spread out upon the table. "If I could have gone on a little longer, only a little longer, the luck would have turned on my side. Yes, it's as plain as the marks upon the cards. See here—and there—and here again."

"Put them away," urged the child. "Try to forget them."

"Try to forget them!" he rejoined, raising his haggard face to hers, and regarding her with an incredulous stare. "To forget them! How are we ever to grow rich if I forget them?"

The child could only shake her head.

"No, no, Nell," said the old man, patting her cheek; "they must not be forgotten. We must make amends for this as soon as we can. Patience—patience, and we'll right thee yet, I promise thee. Lose to-day, win to-morrow. And nothing can be won without anxiety and care—nothing. Come, I am ready."

"Do you know what the time is?" said Mr. Groves, who was smoking with his friends. "Past twelve o'clock—"

—"And a rainy night," added the stout man.

"The Valiant Soldier, by James Groves. Good beds. Cheap entertainment for man and beast," said Mr. Groves, quoting his sign-board. "Half-past twelve o'clock."

"It's very late," said the uneasy child. "I wish we had gone before. What will they think of us! It will be two o'clock by the time we get back. What would it cost, sir, if we stopped here?"

"Two good beds, one-and-sixpence; supper and beer one shilling; total, two shillings and sixpence," replied the Valiant Soldier.

Now, Nell had still the piece of gold sewn in her dress; and when she came to consider the lateness of the hour, and the somnolent habits of Mrs. Jarley, and to imagine the state of consternation in which they would certainly throw that good lady by knocking her up in the middle of the night—and when she reflected, on the other hand, that if they remained where they were, and rose early in the morning, they might get back before she awoke, and could plead the violence of the storm by which they had been overtaken, as a good apology for their absence—she decided, after a great deal of hesitation, to remain. She therefore took her grandfather aside, and telling him that she had still enough left to defray the cost of their lodging, proposed that they should stay there for the night.

"If I had had but that money before—If I had only known of it a few minutes ago!" muttered the old man.

"We will decide to stop here if you please," said Nell, turning hastily to the landlord.

"I think that's prudent," returned Mr. Groves. "You shall have your suppers directly."

Accordingly, when Mr. Groves had smoked his pipe out, knocked out the ashes, and placed it carefully in a corner of the fire-place, with the bowl downwards, he brought in the bread and cheese, and beer, with many high encomiums upon their excellence, and bade his guests to fall to, and make themselves at home. Nell and her grandfather ate sparingly, for both were occupied with their own reflections; the other gentlemen, for whose constitutions beer was too weak and tame a liquid, consoled themselves with spirits and tobacco.

As they would leave the house very early in the morning, the child was anxious to pay for their entertainment before they retired to bed. But as she felt the necessity of concealing her little hoard from her grandfather, and had to change the piece of gold, she took it secretly from its place of concealment, and embraced an opportunity of following the landlord when he went out of the room, and tendered it to him in the little bar.

"Will you give me the change here, if you please?" said the child.

Mr. James Groves was evidently surprised, and looked at the money, and rung it, and looked at the child, and at the money again, as though he had a mind to inquire how she came by it. The coin being genuine, however, and changed at his house, he probably felt, like a wise landlord, that it was no business of his. At any rate, he counted out the change, and gave it her. The child was returning to the room where they had passed the evening, when she fancied she saw a figure just gliding in at the door. There was nothing but a long dark passage between this door and the place where she had changed the money, and, being very certain that no person had passed in or out while she stood there, the thought struck her that she had been watched.

But by whom? When she re-entered the room, she found its inmates exactly as she had left them. The stout fellow lay upon two chairs, resting his head on his hand, and the squinting man reposed in a similar attitude on the opposite side of the table. Between them sat her grandfather, looking intently at the winner with a kind of hungry admiration, and hanging upon his words as if he were some superior being. She was puzzled for a moment, and looked round to see if any one else were there. No. Then she asked her grandfather, in a whisper, whether anybody had left the room while she was absent. "No," he said, "nobody."

It must have been her fancy, then; and yet it was strange, that, without anything in her previous thoughts to lead to it, she should have imagined this figure so very distinctly. She was still wondering and thinking of it, when a girl came to light her to bed.

The old man took leave of the company at the same time, and they went up stairs together. It was a great, rambling house, with dull corridors and wide staircases, which the flaring candles seemed to make more gloomy. She left her grandfather in his chamber, and followed her guide to another, which was at the end of a passage, and approached by some half-dozen crazy steps. This was prepared for her. The girl lingered awhile to talk, and tell her grievances. She had not a good place, she said; the wages were low, and the work was hard. She was going to leave it in a fortnight; the child couldn't recommend her to another, she supposed? Indeed she was afraid another would be difficult to get after living there, for the house had a very indifferent character; there was far too much card-playing, and such like. She was very much mistaken if some of the people who came there oftenest were quite as honest as they might be, but she would'nt have it known that she had said so, for the world. Then there was some rambling allusions to a rejected sweetheart, who had threatened to go a soldiering—a final promise of knocking at the door early in the morning—and "Good night."

The child did not feel comfortable when she was left alone. She could not help thinking of the figure stealing through the passage down stairs; and what the girl had said did not tend to reassure her. The men were very ill-looking. They might get their living by robbing and murdering travellers. Who could tell?

Reasoning herself out of these fears, or losing sight of them for a little while, there came the anxiety to which the adventures of the night gave rise. Here was the old passion awakened again in her grandfather's breast, and to what further distraction it might tempt him, Heaven only knew.—What fears their absence might have occasioned already! Persons might be seeking for them even then. Would they be forgiven in the morning, or turned adrift again? Oh! why had they stopped in that strange place. It would have been better, under any circumstances, to have gone on!

At last, sleep gradually stole upon her—a broken, fitful sleep, troubled by dreams of falling from high towers, and waking with a start and in great terror. A deeper slumber followed this—and then——What! That figure in the room!

A figure was there. Yes, she had drawn

up the blind to admit the light when it should dawn, and there, between the foot of the bed and the dark casement, it crouched and slunk along, groping its way with noiseless hands, and stealing round the bed. She had no voice to cry for help, no power to move, but lay still, watching it.

On it came—on, silently and stealthily, to the bed's head;—the breath so near her pillow, that she shrunk back into it, lest those wandering hands should light upon her face. Back again it stole to the window—then turned its head towards her.

The dark form was a mere blot upon the lighter darkness of the room, but she saw the turning of the head, and felt and knew how the eyes looked and the ears listened. There it remained, motionless as she. At length, still keeping the face towards her, it busied its hands in something, and she heard the chink of money.

Then, on it came again, silent and stealthy as before, and, replacing the garments it had taken from the bed-side, dropped upon its hands and knees, and crawled away. How slowly it seemed to move, now that she could hear but not see it, creeping along the floor! It reached the door at last, and stood upon its feet. The steps creaked beneath its noiseless tread, and it was gone.

The first impulse of the child was to fly from the terror of being by herself in that room—to have somebody by—not to be alone—and then her power of speech would be restored. With no consciousness of having moved, she gained the door.

There was the dreadful shadow, pausing at the bottom of the steps.

She could not pass it; she might have done so, perhaps, in the darkness, without being seized, but her blood curdled at the thought. The figure stood quite still, and so did she; not boldly, but of necessity, for going back into the room was hardly less terrible than going on.

The rain beat fast and furiously without, and ran down in plashing streams from the thatched roof. Some summer insect, with no escape into the air, flew blindly to and fro, beating his body against the walls and ceiling, and filling the silent place with his murmurs. The figure moved again. The child involuntarily did the same. Once in her grandfather's room, she would be safe.

It crept along the passage until it reached the very door she longed so ardently to reach. The child, in the agony of being so near, had almost darted forward with the design of bursting into the room and closing it behind her, when the figure stopped again.

The idea flashed suddenly upon her—what if it entered there, and had a design upon the old man's life! She turned faint and sick. It did. It went in. There was a light inside. The figure was now within the chamber, and she, still dumb—quite dumb, and almost senseless—stood looking on.

The door was partly open. Not knowing what she meant to do, but meaning to preserve him or be killed herself, she staggered forward and looked in. What sight was that which met her view!

The bed had not been lain on, but was smooth and empty. And at a table sat the old man himself, the only living creature there, his white face pinched and sharpened by the greediness which made his eyes unnaturally bright, counting the money of which his hands had robbed her.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST.

With steps more faltering and unsteady than those with which she had approached the room, the child withdrew from the door, and groped her way back to her own chamber. The terror she had lately felt was nothing compared with that which now oppressed her. No strange robber, no treacherous host conniving at the plunder of his guests, or stealing to their beds to kill them in their sleep, no nightly prowler, however terrible and cruel, could have awakened in her bosom half the dread which the recognition of her silent visiter inspired. The grey-headed old man gliding like a ghost into her room and acting the thief while he supposed her fast asleep, then bearing off his prize and hanging over it with the ghastly exultation she had witnessed, was worse—immeasurably worse, and far more dreadful, for the moment, to reflect upon—than anything her wildest fancy could have suggested. If he should return—there was no lock or bolt upon the door, and if, distrustful of having left some money yet behind, he should come back to seek for more—a vague awe and horror surrounded the idea of his slinking in again with stealthy tread, and turning his face toward the empty bed, while she shrank down close at his feet to avoid his touch, which was almost insupportable. She sat and listened. Hark! A footstep on the stairs, and now the door was slowly opening. It was but imagination, yet imagination had all the terrors of reality; nay, it was worse, for the reality would have come and gone, and there an end, but in imagination it was always coming, and never went away.

The feeling which beset the child was one of dim uncertain horror. She had no fear of the dear old grandfather, in whose love for her this disease of the brain had been engendered; but the man she had seen that night, wrapt in the game of chance, lurking in her room, and counting the money by the glimmering light, seemed like another creature in his shape, a monstrous distortion of his image, a something to recoil from, and be the more afraid of, because it bore a likeness to him, and kept close about her, as he did. She could scarcely connect her own affectionate companion, save by his loss, with this old man, so like yet so unlike him. She had wept to see him dull and quiet. How much greater cause she had for weeping now!

The child sat watching and thinking of these things, until the phantom in her mind so increased in gloom and terror, that she felt it would be a relief to hear the old man's voice, or, if he were asleep, even to see him, and banish some of the fears that clustered round his image. She stole down the stairs and passage again. The door was still ajar as she had left it, and the candle burning as before.

She had her own candle in her hand, prepared to say, if he were waking, that she was uneasy and could not rest, and had come to see if his were still alight. Looking into the room, she saw him lying calmly on his bed, and so took courage to enter.

Fast asleep—no passion in the face, no avarice, no anxiety, no wild desire; all gentle, tranquil, and at peace. This was not the gambler, or the shadow in her room; this was not even the worn and jaded man whose face had so often met her own in the grey morning light; this was her dear old friend, her harmless fellow-traveller, her good, kind grandfather.

She had no fear as she looked upon his slumbering features, but she had a deep and weighty sorrow, and it found its relief in tears.

"God bless him!" said the child, stooping softly to kiss his placid cheek. "I see too well now, that they would indeed part us if they found us out, and shut him up from the light of the sun and sky. He has only me to help him. God bless us both!"

Lighting her candle, she retreated as silently as she had come, and, gaining her own room once more, sat up during the remainder of that long, long, miserable night.

At last the day turned her waning candle pale, and she fell asleep. She was quickly roused by the girl who had shown her up to bed; and, as soon as she was dressed, prepared to go down to her grandfather. But first she searched her pocket and found that her money was all gone—not a sixpence remained.

The old man was ready, and in a few seconds they were on their road. The child thought he rather avoided her eye, and appeared to expect that she would tell him of her loss. She felt she must do that, or he might suspect the truth.

"Grandfather," she said in a tremulous voice, after they had walked about a mile in silence, "do you think they are honest people at the house yonder?"

"Why?" returned the old man trembling. "Do I think them honest—yes, they played honestly."

"I'll tell you why I ask," rejoined Nell. "I lost some money last night—out of my

bedroom I am sure. Unless it was taken by somebody in jest—only in jest, dear grandfather, which would make me laugh heartily if I could but know it—"

"Who would take money in jest?" returned the old man in a hurried manner. "Those who take money, take it to keep. Don't talk of jest."

"Then it was stolen out of my room, dear," said the child, whose last hope was destroyed by the manner of this reply.

"But is there no more, Nell?" said the old man; "no more anywhere? Was it all taken—every farthing of it—was there nothing left?"

"Nothing," replied the child.

"We must get more," said the old man, "we must earn it, Nell, hoard it up, scrape it together, come by it somehow. Never mind this loss. Tell nobody of it, and perhaps we may regain it. Don't ask how;—we may regain it, and a great deal more;—but tell nobody, or trouble may come of it. And so they took it out of thy room, when thou wert asleep!" he added in a compassionate tone, very different from the secret, cunning way in which he had spoken until now. "Poor Nell, poor little Nell!"

The child hung down her head and wept. The sympathizing tone in which he spoke was quite sincere; she was sure of that. It was not the lightest part of her sorrow to know that this was done for her.

"Not a word about it to any one but me," said the old man, "no, not even to me," he added hastily, "for it can do no good. All the losses that ever were, are not worth tears from thy eyes, darling. Why should they be, when we will win them back?"

"Let them go," said the child, looking up. "Let them go, once and for ever, and I would never shed another tear if every penny had been a thousand pounds."

"Well, well," returned the old man, checking himself as some impetuous answer rose to his lips, "she knows no better. I should be thankful for it."

"But listen to me," said the child earnestly, "will you listen to me?"

"Ay, ay, I'll listen," returned the old man, still without looking at her; "a pretty voice. It has always a sweet sound to me. It always had when it was her mother's, poor child."

"Let me persuade you, then,—oh, do let me persuade you," said the child, "to think no more of gains or losses, and to try no fortune but the fortune we pursue together."

"We pursue this aim together," retorted her grandfather, still looking away, and seeming to confer with himself. "Whose image sanctifies the game?"

"Have we been worse off," resumed the child, "since you forgot these cares, and we have been travelling on together? Have we not been much better and happier without a home to shelter us, than ever we were in that unhappy house, when they were on your mind?"

"She speaks the truth," murmured the old man in the same tone as before. "It must not turn me, but it is the truth—no doubt it is."

"Only remember what we have been since that bright morning when we turned our backs upon it for the last time," said Nell, "only remember what we have been since we have been free of all those miseries—what peaceful days and quiet nights we have had—what pleasant times we have known—what happiness we have enjoyed. If we have been tired or hungry, we have been soon refreshed, and slept the sounder for it. Think what beautiful things we have seen, and how contented we have felt. And why was this blessed change?"

He stopped her with a motion of his hand, and bade her talk to him no more just then, for he was busy. After a time he kissed her cheek, still motioning her to silence, and walked on, looking far before him, and sometimes stopping and gazing with a puckered brow upon the ground, as if he were painfully trying to collect his disordered thoughts.—Once she saw tears in his eyes. When he had gone on thus for some time, he took her hand in his as he was accustomed to do, with nothing of the violence or animation of his late manner; and so, by degrees so fine that the child could not trace them, settled down into his usual quiet way, and suffered her to lead him where she would.

When they presented themselves in the midst of the stupendous collection, they found, as Nell had anticipated, that Mrs. Jarley was not yet out of bed, and that, although she had suffered some uneasiness on their account over-night, and had indeed sat up for them until past eleven o'clock, she had retired in the persuasion, that, being overtaken by the storm at some distance from home, they had sought the nearest shelter, and would not return before morning. Nell immediately applied herself with great assiduity to the decoration and preparation of the room, and had the satisfaction of completing her task, and dressing herself neatly, before the beloved of the Royal Family came down to breakfast.

"We haven't had," said Mrs. Jarley when the meal was over, "more than eight

of Miss Monflathers's young ladies all the time we've been here, and there's twenty-six of 'em, as I was told by the cook when I asked her a question or two and put her on the free-list. We must try 'em with a parcel of new bills, and you shall take it, my dear, and see what effect that has upon em."

The proposed expedition being one of paramount importance, Mrs. Jarley adjusted Nell's bonnet with her own hands, and declaring that she certainly did look very pretty, and reflected credit on the establishment, dismissed her with many commendations, and certain needful directions as to the turnings on the right which she was to take, and the turnings on the left which she was to avoid. Thus instructed, Nell had no difficulty in finding out Miss Monflathers's Boarding and Day Establishment, which was a large house, with a high wall, and a large garden-gate with a large brass plate, and a small grating through which Miss Monflathers's parlour-maid inspected all visiters before admitting them; for nothing in the shape of a man—no, not even a milkman—was suffered, without special license, to pass that gate. Even the tax-gatherer, who was stout, and wore spectacles and a broad-brimmed hat, had the taxes handed through the grating. More obdurate than gate of adamant or brass, this gate of Miss Monflathers's frowned on all mankind. The very butcher respected it as a gate of mystery, and left off whistling when he rang the bell.

As Nell approached the awful door, it turned slowly upon its hinges with a creaking noise, and forth from the solemn grove beyond, came a long file of young ladies, two and two, all with open books in their hands, and some with parasols likewise. And last of the goodly procession came Miss Monflathers, bearing herself a parasol of lilac silk, and supported by two smiling teachers, each mortally envious of the other, and devoted unto Miss Monflathers.

Confused by the looks and whispers of the girls, Nell stood with downcast eyes and suffered the procession to pass on, until Miss Monflathers, bringing up the rear, approached her, when she curtsied and presented her little packet; on receipt whereof Miss Monflathers commanded that the line should halt.

"You're the wax-work child, are you not?" said Miss Monflathers.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Nell, colouring deeply, for the young ladies had collected about her, and she was the centre on which all eyes were fixed.

"And don't you think you must be a very wicked little child," said Miss Monflathers, who was of rather uncertain temper, and lost no opportunity of impressing moral truths upon the tender minds of the young ladies, "to be a wax-work child at all!"

Poor Nell had never viewed her position in this light, and not knowing what to say, remained silent, blushing more deeply than before.

"Don't you know," said Miss Monflathers, "that it's very naughty and unfeminine, and a perversion of the properties wisely and benignantly transmitted to us, with expansive powers, to be roused from their dormant state through the medium of cultivation!"

The two teachers murmured their respectful approval of this home-thrust, and looked at Nell as though they would have said, that there indeed Miss Monflathers had hit her very hard. Then they smiled, and glanced at Miss Monflathers, and then, their eyes meeting, they exchanged looks which plainly said, that each considered herself smiler in ordinary to Miss Monflathers, and regarded the other as having no right to smile, and that her so doing was an act of presumption and impertinence.

"Don't you feel how naughty it is of you," resumed Miss Monflathers, "to be a wax-work child, when you might have the proud consciousness of assisting, to the extent of your infant powers, the manufactures of your country; of improving your mind by the constant contemplation of the steam-engine; and of earning a comfortable and independent subsistence of from two-and-nine-pence to three shillings a week!—Don't you know that the harder you are at work, the happier you are!"

"'How doth the little busy—'" murmured one of the teachers, in quotation from Doctor Watts.

"Eh!" said Miss Monflathers, turning sharply round. "Who said that!"

Of course the teacher who had not said it, indicated the rival who had, whom Miss Monflathers frowningly requested to hold her peace; by that means throwing the informing teacher into raptures of joy.

"The little busy bee," said Miss Monflathers, drawing herself up, "is applicable only to genteel children.

'In books, or work, or healthful play,'

is quite right, as far as they are concerned; and the work means painting on velvet, fancy needle-work, or embroidery. In such cases as these," pointing to Nell, with her parasol, "and in the case of all poor people's children, we should read it thus:

'In work, work, work. In work alway
Let my first years be past,
That I may give for ev'ry day
Some good account at last'"

A deep hum of applause rose not only from the two teachers, but from all the pupils, who were equally astonished to hear Miss Monflathers improvising after this brilliant style; for although she had been long known as a politician, she had never appeared before as an original poet. Just then somebody happened to discover that Nell was crying, and all eyes were again turned towards her.

There were indeed tears in her eyes, and drawing out her handkerchief to brush them away, she happened to let it fall. Before she could stoop to pick it up, one young lady, of about fifteen or sixteen, who had been standing a little apart from the others, as though she had no recognised place among them, sprang forward and put it in her hand. She was gliding timidly away again, when she was arrested by the governess.

"It was Miss Edwards who did that, I *know*," said Miss Monflathers, predictively. "Now, I am sure that was Miss Edwards."

It was Miss Edwards, and everybody said it was Miss Edwards, and Miss Edwards herself admitted that it was.

"Is it not," said Miss Monflathers, putting down her parasol to take a severer view of the offender, "a most remarkable thing, Miss Edwards, that you have an attachment to the lower classes which always draws you to their sides; or, rather, is it not a most extraordinary thing that all I say and do will not wean you from propensities which your original station in life has unhappily rendered habitual to you,—you extremely vulgar-minded girl?"

"I really intended no harm, ma'am," said a sweet voice. "It was a momentary impulse, indeed."

"An impulse!" repeated Miss Monflathers scornfully. "I wonder that you presume to speak of impulses to me"—both the teachers assented—"I am astonished"—both the teachers were astonished—"I suppose it is an impulse which induces you to take the part of every grovelling and debased person that comes in your way"—both the teachers supposed so too.

"But I would have you know, Miss Edwards," resumed the governess in a tone of increased severity, "that you cannot be permitted—if it be only for the sake of preserving a proper example and decorum in this establishment—that you cannot be permitted, and that you shall not be permitted, to fly in the face of your superiors in this exceedingly gross manner. If *you* have no reason to feel a becoming pride before wax-work children, there are young ladies here who have, and you must either

defer to those young ladies or leave the establishment, Miss Edwards."

This young lady, being motherless and poor, was apprenticed at the school—taught for nothing—teaching others what she learnt, for nothing—boarded for nothing—lodged for nothing—and set down and rated as something immeasurably less than nothing, by all the dwellers in the house. The servant-maids felt her inferiority, for they were better treated; free to come and go, and regarded in their stations with much more respect. The teachers were infinitely superior, for they had paid to go to school in their time, and were paid now. The pupils cared little for a companion who had no grand stories to tell about home; no friends to come with post-horses, and be received in all humility, with cake and wine, by the governess; no deferential servant to attend and bear her home for the holidays; nothing genteel to talk about, and nothing to display. But why was Miss Monflathers always vexed and irritated with the poor apprentice—how did that come to pass?

Why, the gayest feather in Miss Monflathers's cap, and the brightest glory of Miss Monflathers's school, was a baronet's daughter—the real live daughter of a real live baronet—who, by some extraordinary reversal of the Laws of Nature, was not only plain in features but dull in intellect, while the poor apprentice had both a ready wit, and a handsome face and figure. It seems incredible. Here was Miss Edwards, who only paid a small premium which had been spent long ago, every day outshining and excelling the baronet's daughter, who learned all the extras (or was taught them all) and whose half-yearly bill came to double that of any other young lady's in the school, making no account of the honour and reputation of her pupilage. Therefore, and because she was a dependant, Miss Monflathers had a great dislike to Miss Edwards, and was spiteful to her, and aggravated by her, and, when she had compassion on little Nell, verbally fell upon and maltreated her as we have already seen.

"You will not take the air to-day, Miss Edwards," said Miss Monflathers. "Have the goodness to retire to your own room, and not to leave it without permission."

The poor girl was moving hastily away, when she was suddenly, in nautical phrase, "brought to" by a subdued shriek from Miss Monflathers.

"She has passed me without any salute!" cried the governess, raising her eyes to the sky. "She has actually passed me without the slightest acknowledgment of my presence!"

The young lady turned and curtsied. Nell could see that she raised her dark eyes to the face of her superior, and that their expression, and that of her whole attitude for the instant, was one of mute but most touching appeal against this ungenerous usage. Miss Monflathers only tossed her head in reply, and the great gate closed upon a bursting heart.

"As for you, you wicked child," said Miss Monflathers, turning to Nell, "tell your mistress that if she presumes to take the liberty of sending to me any more, I will write to the legislative authorities and have her put in the stocks, or compelled to do penance in a white sheet; and you may depend upon it that you shall certainly experience the treadmill if you dare to come here again. Now ladies, on."

The procession filed off, two and two, with the books and parasols, and Miss Monflathers, calling the Baronet's daughter to walk with her and smooth her ruffled feelings, discarded the two teachers—who by this time had exchanged their smiles for looks of sympathy—and left them to bring up the rear, and hate each other a little more for being obliged to walk together.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND.

Mrs. Jarley's wrath on first learning that she had been threatened with the indignity of Stocks and Penance, passed all description. The genuine and only Jarley exposed to public scorn, jeered by children, and flouted by beadles! The delight of the Nobility and Gentry shorn of a bonnet which a Lady Mayoress might have sighed to wear, and arrayed in a white sheet as a spectacle of mortification and humility! And Miss Monflathers, the audacious creature who presumed, even in the dimmest and remotest distance of her imagination, to conjure up the degrading picture, "I am a' most inclined," said Mrs. Jarley, bursting with the fullness of her anger and the weakness of her means of revenge, "to turn atheist when I think of it."

But instead of adopting this course of retaliation, Mrs. Jarley, on second thoughts

brought out the suspicious bottle, and ordering glasses to be set forth upon her favourite drum, and sinking into a chair behind it, called her satellites about her, and to them several times recounted word for word the affronts she had received. This done, she begged them in a kind of deep despair to drink; then laughed, then cried, then took a little sip herself, then laughed and cried again, and took a little more; and so by degrees the worthy lady went on, increasing in smiles and decreasing in tears, until at last she could not laugh enough at Miss Monflathers, who, from being an object of dire vexation, became one of sheer ridicule and absurdity.

"For which of us is best off, I wonder," quoth Mrs. Jarley, "she or me? It's only talking when all is said and done, and if she talks of me in the stocks, why I can talk of her in the stocks, which is a good deal funnier if we come to that. Lord, what *does* it matter, after all!"

Having arrived at this comfortable frame of mind (to which she had been greatly assisted by certain short interjectional remarks of the philosophic George), Mrs. Jarley consoled Nell with many kind words, and requested as a personal favour that whenever she thought of Miss Monflathers she would do nothing else but laugh at her, all the days of her life.

So ended Mrs. Jarley's wrath, which subsided long before the going down of the sun. Nell's anxieties, however, were of a deeper kind, and the checks they imposed upon her cheerfulness were not so easily removed.

That evening, as she had dreaded, her grandfather stole away, and did not come back until the night was far spent. Worn out as she was, and fatigued in mind and body, she sat up alone, counting the minutes, until he returned—penniless, broken-spirited, and wretched, but still hotly bent upon his infatuation.

"Get me money," he said wildly, as they parted for the night. "I must have money, Nell. It shall be paid thee back with gallant interest one day; but all the money that comes unto thy hands, must be mine —not for myself, but to use for thee. Remember, Nell, to use for thee!"

What could the child do, with the knowledge she had, but give him every penny that came into her hands, lest he should be tempted on to rob their benefactress? If she told the truth (so thought the child) he would be treated as a madman; if she did not supply him with money, he would supply himself; supplying him, she fed the fire that burnt him up, and put him perhaps beyond recovery. Distracted by these thoughts, borne down by the weight of the sorrow which she dared not tell, tortured by a crowd of apprehensions whenever the old man was absent, and dreading alike his stay and his return, the colour forsook her cheek, her eye grew dim, and her heart was oppressed and heavy. All her old sorrows had come back upon her, augmented by new fears and doubts; by day they were ever present to her mind; by night they hovered round her pillow, and haunted her in dreams.

It was natural that, in the midst of her affliction, she should often revert to that sweet young lady of whom she had only caught a hasty glance, but whose sympathy, expressed in one slight brief action, dwelt in her memory like the kindnesses of years. She would often think, if she had such a friend as that to whom to tell her griefs, how much lighter her heart would be—that if she were but free to hear that voice, she would be happier. Then she would wish that she were something better, that she were not quite so poor and humble, that she dared address her without fearing a repulse; and then feel that there was an immeasurable distance between them, and have no hope that the young lady thought of her any more.

It was now holiday-time at the schools, and the young ladies had gone home, and Miss Monflathers was reported to be flourishing in London and damaging the hearts of middle-aged gentlemen; but nobody said anything about Miss Edwards, whether she had gone home, or whether she had any home to go to; whether she was still at the school, or anything about her. But one evening, as Nell was returning from a lonely walk, she happened to pass the inn where the stage-coaches stopped, just as one drove up, and there was the beautiful girl she so well remembered, pressing forward to embrace a young child whom they were helping down from the roof.

Well, this was her sister, her little sister, much younger than Nell, whom she had not seen (so the story went afterwards) for five years, and to bring whom to that place on a short visit, she had been saving her poor means all that time. Nell felt as if her heart would break when she saw them meet. They went a little apart from the knot of people who had congregated about the coach, and fell upon each other's neck, and sobbed, and wept with joy. Their plain and simple dress, the distance which the child had come alone, their agitation and delight, and the tears they shed, would have told their history by themselves.

They became a little more composed in a short time, and went away, not so much

hand in hand as clinging to each other. "Are you sure you're happy, sister?" said the child, as they passed where Nell was standing. "Quite happy, now," she answered. "But always?" said the child. "Ah! sister, why do you turn away your face!"

Nell could not help following at a little distance. They went to the house of an old nurse, where the elder sister had engaged a bed-room for the child. "I shall come to you early every morning," she said, "and we can be together all the day." "Why not at night-time, too? Dear sister, would they be angry with you for *that?*"

Why were the eyes of little Nell wet, that night, with tears like those of the two sisters! Why did she bear a grateful heart because they had met, and feel it pain to think that they would shortly part? Let us not believe that any selfish reference — unconscious though it might have been — to her own trials awoke this sympathy, but thank God that the innocent joys of others can strongly move us, and that we, even in our fallen nature, have one source of pure emotion which must be prized in Heaven!

By morning's cheerful glow, but oftener still by evening's gentle light, the child, with a respect for the short and happy intercourse of these two sisters which forbade her to approach and say a thankful word, although she yearned to do so, followed them at a distance in their walks and rambles, stopping when they stopped, sitting on the grass when they sat down, rising when they went on, and feeling it a companionship and delight to be so near them. Their evening walk was by a river's side. Here, every night, the child was, too, unseen by them, unthought of, unregarded; but feeling as if they were her friends, as if they had confidences and trusts together, as if her load were lightened and less hard to bear; as if they mingled their sorrows, and found mutual consolation. It was a weak fancy perhaps, the childish fancy of a young and lonely creature; but, night after night, and still the sisters loitered in the same place, and still the child followed with a mild and softened heart.

She was much startled, on returning home one night, to find that Mrs. Jarley had commanded an announcement to be prepared, to the effect that the stupendous collection would only remain in its present quarters one day longer; in fulfilment of which threat (for all announcements connected with public amusements are well known to be irrevocable and most exact), the stupendous collection shut up next day.

"Are we going from this place directly, ma'am?" said Nell.

"Look here, child," returned Mrs. Jarley. "That'll inform you." And so saying, Mrs. Jarley produced another announcement, wherein it was stated, that, in consequence of numerous inquiries at the wax-work door, and in consequence of crowds having been disappointed in obtaining admission, the Exhibition would be continued for one week longer, and would re-open next day.

"For, now that the schools are gone, and the regular sight-seers exhausted," said Mrs. Jarley, "we come to the General Public, and they want stimulating."

Upon the following day, at noon, Mrs. Jarley established herself behind the highly-ornamented table, attended by the distinguished effigies before-mentioned, and ordered the doors to be thrown open for the re-admission of a discerning and enlightened public. But the first day's operations were by no means of a successful character, inasmuch as the general public, though they manifested a lively interest in Mrs. Jarley, personally, and such of her waxen satellites as were to be seen for nothing, were not affected by any impulses moving them to the payment of sixpence a head. Thus, notwithstanding that a great many people continued to stare at the entry and the figures therein displayed; and remained there by the hour at a time, to hear the barrel-organ played and to read the bills; and notwithstanding that they were kind enough to recommend their friends to patronise the exhibition in the like manner, until the door-way was regularly blocked by half the population of the town, who, when they went off duty, were relieved by the other half; it was not found that the treasury was any thing the richer, or that the prospects of the establishment were at all encouraging.

In this depressed state of the classical market, Mrs. Jarley made extraordinary efforts to stimulate the popular taste, and whet the popular curiosity. Certain machinery in the body of the nun on the leads over the door was cleaned up and put in motion, so that the figure shook its head paralytically all day long, to the great admiration of a drunken, but very protestant, barber over the way, who looked upon the said paralytic motion as typical of the degrading effect wrought upon the human mind by the ceremonies of the Romish church, and discoursed upon that theme with great eloquence and morality. The two carters constantly passed in and out of the exhibition-room, under various disguises, protesting aloud that the sight was

better worth the money than anything they had beheld in all their lives, and urging the bystanders, with tears in their eyes, not to neglect such a brilliant gratification. Mrs. Jarley sat in the pay-place, chinking silver moneys from noon till night, and solemnly calling upon the crowd to take notice that the price of admission was only sixpence, and that the departure of the whole collection, on a short tour among the Crowned Heads of Europe, was positively fixed for that day week.

"So, be in time, be in time, be in time," said Mrs. Jarley, at the close of every such address. "Remember that this is Jarley's stupendous collection of upwards of One Hundred Figures, and that it is the only collection in the world; all others being impostors and deceptions. Be in time, be in time, be in time!"

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD.

As the course of this tale requires that we should become acquainted, somewhere hereabouts, with a few particulars connected with the domestic economy of Mr. Sampson Brass, and as a more convenient place than the present is not likely to occur for that purpose, the historian takes the friendly reader by the hand, and springing with him into the air, and cleaving the same at a greater rate than ever Don Cleophas Leandro Perez Zambullo and his familiar travelled through that pleasant region in company, alights with him upon the pavement of Bevis Marks.

The intrepid aeronauts alight before a small dark house, once the residence of Mr. Sampson Brass.

In the parlour window of this little habitation, which is so close upon the footway that the passenger who takes the wall brushes the dim glass with his coat-sleeve —much to its improvement, for it is very dirty—in this parlour window in the days of its occupation by Sampson Brass, there hung, all awry and slack and discoloured by the sun, a curtain of faded green, so threadbare from long service as by no means to intercept the view of the little dark room, but rather to afford a favourable medium through which to observe it accurately. There was not much to look at. A rickety table, with spare bundles of papers, yellow and ragged from long carriage in the pocket, ostentatiously displayed upon its top; a couple of stools set face to face on opposite sides of this crazy piece of furniture; a treacherous old chair by the fire-place, whose withered arms had hugged full many a client and helped to squeeze him dry; a second-hand wig box, used as a depository for blank writs and declarations and other small forms of law, once the sole contents of the head which belonged to the wig which belonged to the box, as they were now of the box itself; two or three common books of practice; a jar of ink, a pounce-box, a stunted hearth-broom, a carpet trodden to shreds, but still clinging with the tightness of desperation to its tacks—these with the yellow wainscoat of the walls, the smoke-discoloured ceiling, the dust and cobwebs, were among the most prominent decorations of the office of Mr. Sampson Brass.

But this was mere still-life, of no greater importance than the plate, "Brass, Solicitor," upon the door, and the bill, "First floor to let to a single gentleman," which was tied to the knocker. The office commonly held two examples of animated nature, more to the purpose of this history, and in whom it has a stronger interest and more particular concern.

Of these, one was Mr. Brass himself, who has already appeared in these pages. The other was his clerk, assistant, housekeeper, secretary, confidential plotter, adviser, intriguer, and bill of cost increaser, Miss Brass—a kind of amazon at common law, of whom it may be desirable to offer a brief description.

Miss Sally Brass, then, was a lady of thirty-five or thereabouts, of a gaunt and bony figure, and a resolute bearing, which, if it repressed the softer emotions of love, and kept admirers at a distance, certainly inspired a feeling akin to awe in the breasts of those male strangers who had the happiness to approach her. In face she bore a striking resemblance to her brother, Sampson—so exact, indeed, was the likeness between them, that had it consorted with Miss Brass's maiden modesty and gentle womanhood to have assumed her brother's clothes in a frolic and sat down beside him, it would have been difficult for the oldest friend of the family to determine which was Sampson and which Sally, especially as the lady carried upon her upper lip certain reddish demonstrations, which, if the imagination had been assisted by her attire, might have been mistaken for a beard. These were, however, in all probability, nothing more than eye-lashes in a wrong place, as the eyes of Miss Brass were quite free from any such natural impertinencies. In complexion Miss Brass was sallow — rather a dirty-sallow so to speak — but this hue was agreeably relieved by the healthy glow which mantled in the extreme tip of her laughing nose. Her voice was exceedingly impressive—deep and rich in quality, and, once heard, not easily forgotten. Her usual dress was a green gown, in colour not unlike the curtain of the office window, made tight to the figure, and terminating at the throat, where it was fastened behind by a pecu-

liarly large and massive button. Feeling, no doubt, that simplicity and plainness are the soul of elegance, Miss Brass wore no collar or kerchief except upon her head which was invariably ornamented with a brown gauze scarf, like the wing of the fabled vampire, and which, twisted into any form that happened to suggest itself, formed an easy and graceful head-dress.

Such was Miss Brass in person. In mind, she was of a strong and vigorous turn, having from her earliest youth devoted herself with uncommon ardour to the study of the law; not wasting her speculations upon its eagle flights, which are rare, but tracing it attentively through all the slippery and eel-like crawlings in which it commonly pursues its way. Nor had she, like many persons of great intellect, confined herself to theory, or stopped short where practical usefulness begins; inasmuch as she could engross, fair-copy, fill up printed forms with perfect accuracy, and in short transact any ordinary duty of the office down to pouncing a skin of parchment or mending a pen. It is difficult to understand how, possessed of these combined attractions she should remain Miss Brass; but whether she had steeled her heart against mankind, or whether those who might have wooed and won her, were deterred by fears that, being learned in the law, she might have too near her fingers' ends, those particular statutes which regulate what are familiarly termed actions for breach, certain it is that she was still in a state of celibacy, and still in possession of her old stool opposite to that of her brother Sampson. And equally certain it is, by the way, that between these two stools a great many people had come to the ground.

One morning Mr. Sampson Brass sat upon his stool copying some legal process, and viciously digging his pen deep into the paper, as if he were writing upon the very heart of the party against whom it was directed; and Miss Sally Brass sat upon her stool making a new pen, preparatory to drawing out a little bill, which was her favourite occupation; and so they sat in silence for a long time, until Miss Brass broke silence.

"Have you nearly done, Sammy?" said Miss Brass; for in her mild and feminine lips, Sampson became Sammy, and all things were softened down.

"No," returned her brother. "It would have been all done though, if you had helped at the right time."

"Oh yes, indeed," cried Miss Sally;—"you want my help, don't you?—*you*, too, that are going to keep a clerk!"

"Am I going to keep a clerk for my own pleasure, or because of my own wish, you provoking rascal!" said Mr. Brass, putting his pen in his mouth, and grinning spitefully at his sister. "What do you taunt me about going to keep a clerk for?"

It may be observed in this place, lest the fact of Mr. Brass calling a lady a rascal, should occasion any wonderment or surprise, that he was so habituated to having her near him in a man's capacity, that he had gradually accustomed himself to talk to her, as though she was really a man. And this feeling was so perfectly reciprocal, that not only did Mr. Brass often call Miss Brass a rascal, or even put an adjective before the rascal, but Miss Brass looked upon it as quite a matter of course, and was as little moved as any other lady would be by being called an angel.

"What do you taunt me after three hours' talk last night, with going to keep a clerk, for?" repeated Mr. Brass, grinning again, with the pen in his mouth, like some nobleman's or gentleman's crest. "Is it my fault?"

"All I know is," said Miss Sally, smiling drily, for she delighted in nothing so much as irritating her brother, "that if every one of your clients is to force us to keep a clerk, whether we want to or not, you had better leave off business, strike yourself off the roll, and get taken into execution as soon as you can."

"Have we got any other client like him?" said Brass. "Have we got another client like him, now—will you answer me that?"

"Do you mean in the face?" said his sister.

"Do I mean in the face!"—sneered Sampson Brass, reaching over to take up the bill-book, and fluttering its leaves rapidly. "Look here,—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—all through. Whether should I take a clerk that he recommends, and says 'this is the man for you,' or lose all this—eh?"

Miss Sally deigned to make no reply, but smiled again, and went on with her work.

"But I know what it is," resumed Brass, after a short silence. "You're afraid you won't have as long a finger in the business as you've been used to have. Do you think I don't see through that?"

"The business wouldn't go on very long, I expect, without me," returned his sister, composedly. "Don't you be a fool and provoke me, Sammy, but mind what you're doing, and do it."

Sampson Brass, who was at heart in great fear of his sister, sulkily bent over his writing again, and listened as she said:

"If I determined that the clerk ought not to come, of course he wouldn't be allowed to come. — You know that well enough, so don't talk nonsense."

Mr. Brass received this observation with increased meekness, merely remarking, under his breath, that he didn't like that kind of joking, and that Miss Sally would be "a much better fellow" if she forbore to aggravate him. To this compliment Miss Sally replied, that she had a relish for the amusement, and had no intention to forego its gratification. Mr. Brass not caring, as it seemed, to pursue the subject any further, they both plied their pens at a great pace, and there the discussion ended.

While they were thus employed, the window was suddenly darkened, as by some person standing close against it. As Mr. Brass and Sally looked up to ascertain the cause, the top sash was nimbly lowered from without, and Quilp thrust in his head.

"Hallo!" he said, standing on tip-toe on the window-sill, and looking down into the room. "Is there anybody at home! Is there any of the Devil's ware here? Is Brass at a premium, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the lawyer in an affected ecstasy. "Oh, very good, sir! Oh, very good indeed! Quite eccentric! Dear me, what humour he has!"

"Is that my Sally?" croaked the dwarf ogling the fair Miss Brass. "Is it Justice with the bandage off her eyes, and without the sword and scales! Is it the Strong Arm of the Law? Is it the Virgin of Bevis?"

"What an amazing flow of spirits!" cried Brass. "Upon my word, it's quite extraordinary!"

"Open the door," said Quilp. "I've got him here. Such a clerk for you, Brass, such a prize, such an ace of trumps. Be quick and open the door, or, if there's another lawyer near and he should happen to look out of window, he'll snap him up before your eyes, he will."

It is probable that the loss of the phœnix of clerks, even to a rival practitioner, would

not have broken Mr. Brass's heart; but, pretending great alacrity, he rose from his seat, and going to the door, returned, introducing his client, who led by the hand no less a person than Mr. Richard Swiveller.

"There she is," said Quilp, stopping short at the door, and wrinkling up his eyebrows as he looked towards Miss Sally; "there is the woman I ought to have married—there is the beautiful Sarah—there is the female who has all the charms of her sex and none of their weaknesses. Oh Sally, Sally!"

To this amorous address Miss Brass briefly responded "Bother!"

"Hard-hearted as the metal from which she takes her name," said Quilp. "Why don't she change it—melt down the brass, and take another name?"

"Hold your nonsense, Mr. Quilp, do," returned Miss Sally, with a grim smile. "I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself before a strange young man."

"The strange young man," said Quilp, handing Dick Swiveller forward, "is too susceptible himself, not to understand me well. This is Mr. Swiveller, my intimate friend—a gentleman of good family and great expectations, but who, having rather involved himself by youthful indiscretion, is content for a time to fill the humble station of a clerk—humble, but here most enviable. What a delicious atmosphere!"

If Mr. Quilp spoke figuratively, and meant to imply that the air breathed by Miss Sally Brass was sweetened and rarefied by that dainty creature, he had doubtless good reason for what he said. But if he spoke of the delights of the atmosphere of Mr. Brass's office in a literal sense, he had certainly a peculiar taste, as it was of a close and earthy kind, and, besides being frequently impregnated with strong whiffs of the second-hand wearing apparel exposed for sale in Duke's Place and Houndsditch, had a decided flavour of rats and mice, and a taint of mouldiness. Perhaps some doubts of its pure delight presented themselves to Mr. Swiveller, as he gave vent to one or two short abrupt sniffs, and looked incredulously at the grinning dwarf.

"Mr. Swiveller," said Quilp, "being pretty well accustomed to the agricultural pursuit of sowing wild oats, Miss Sally, prudently considers that half a loaf is better than no bread. To be out of harm's way he prudently thinks is something too, and therefore he accepts your brother's offer. Brass, Mr. Swiveller is yours."

"I am very glad, sir," said Mr. Brass, "very glad indeed. Mr. Swiveller, sir, is fortunate to have your friendship. You may be very proud, sir, to have the friendship of Mr. Quilp."

Dick murmured something about never wanting a friend or a bottle to give him, and also gasped forth his favourite allusion to the wing of friendship and its never moulting a feather; but his faculties appeared to be absorbed in the contemplation of Miss Sally Brass, at whom he stared with blank and rueful looks, which delighted the watchful dwarf beyond measure. As to the divine Miss Sally herself, she rubbed her hands as men of business do, and took a few turns up and down the office with her pen behind her ear.

"I suppose," said the dwarf, turning briskly to his legal friend, "that Mr. Swiveller enters upon his duties at once? It's Monday morning."

"At once, if you please, sir, by all means," returned Brass.

"Miss Sally will teach him law, the delightful study of the law," said Quilp; "she'll be his guide, his friend, his companion, his Blackstone, his Coke upon Littleton, his Young Lawyer's Best Companion."

"He is exceedingly eloquent," said Brass like a man abstracted, and looking at the roofs of the opposite houses, with his hands in his pockets; "he has an extraordinary flow of language. Beautiful, really."

"With Miss Sally," Quilp went on, "and the beautiful fictions of the law, his days will pass like minutes. Those charming creations of the poet, John Doe and Richard Roe, when they first dawn upon him, will open a new world for the enlargement of his mind and the improvement of his heart."

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful! Beau-ti-ful indeed!" cried Brass. "It's a treat to hear him!"

"Where will Mr. Swiveller sit?" said Quilp, looking round.

"Why, we'll buy another stool, sir," returned Brass. "We hadn't any thoughts of having a gentleman with us, sir, until you were kind enough to suggest it, and our accommodation's not extensive. We'll look about for a second-hand stool, sir. In the meantime, if Mr. Swiveller will take my seat, and try his hand at a fair copy of this ejectment, as I shall be out pretty well all the morning——"

"Walk with me," said Quilp. "I have a word or two to say to you on points of business. Can you spare the time?"

"Can I spare the time to walk with *you*, sir? You're joking, sir, you're joking with me," replied the lawyer, putting on his hat. "I'm ready, sir, quite ready. My time must be fully occupied indeed, sir, not

to leave me time to walk with you. It's not everybody, sir, who has an opportunity of improving himself by the conversation of Mr. Quilp."

The dwarf glanced sarcastically at his brazen friend, and, with a short dry cough, turned upon his heel to bid adieu to Miss Sally. After a very gallant parting on his side, and a very cool and gentlemanly sort of one on hers, he nodded to Dick Swiveller, and withdrew with the attorney.

Dick stood at the desk in a state of utter stupefaction, staring with all his might at the beauteous Sally, as if she had been some curious animal whose like had never lived. When the dwarf got into the street, he mounted again upon the window-sill, and looked into the office for a moment, with a grinning face, as a man might peep into a cage. Dick glanced upward at him, but without any token of recognition; and long after he had disappeared, still stood gazing upon Miss Sally Brass, seeing or thinking of nothing else, and rooted to the spot.

Miss Brass being by this time deep in the bill of costs, took no notice whatever of Dick, but went scratching on, with a noisy pen, scoring down the figures with evident delight, and working like a steam-engine. There stood Dick, gazing now at the green gown, now at the brown head-dress, now at the face, and now at the rapid pen, in a state of stupid perplexity, wondering how he got into the company of that strange monster, and whether it was a dream and he would ever wake. At last he heaved a deep sigh, and began slowly pulling off his coat.

Mr. Swiveller pulled off his coat, and folded it up with great elaboration, staring at Miss Sally all the time; then put on a blue jacket with a double row of gilt buttons, which he had originally ordered for aquatic expeditions, but had brought with him that morning for office purposes; and, still keeping his eye upon her, suffered himself to drop down silently upon Mr. Brass's stool. Then he underwent a relapse, and becoming powerless again, rested his chin upon his hand, and opened his eyes so wide, that it appeared quite out of the question that he could ever close them any more

When he had looked so long that he could see nothing, Dick took his eyes off the fair object of his amazement, turned over the leaves of the draft he was to copy, dipped his pen into the inkstand, and at last, and by slow approaches, began to write. But he had not written half-a-dozen words, when, reaching over to the inkstand to take a fresh dip, he happened to raise his eyes, and there was the intolerable brown head-dress — there was the green gown — there, in short, was Miss Sally Brass, arrayed in all her charms, and more tremendous than ever.

This happened so often, that Mr. Swiveller by degrees began to feel strange influences creeping over him — horrible desires to annihilate this Sally Brass—mysterious promptings to knock her head-dress off and try how she looked without it.—There was a very large ruler on the table — a large, black, shining ruler. Mr. Swiveller took it up and began to rub his nose with it.

From rubbing his nose with the ruler, to poising it in his hand and giving it an occasional flourish after the tomahawk manner, the transition was easy and natural. In some of these flourishes it went close to Miss Sally's head; the ragged edges of the head-dress fluttered with the wind it raised; advance it but an inch, and that great brown knot was on the ground: yet still the unconscious maiden worked away, and never raised her eyes.

Well, this was a great relief. It was a good thing to write doggedly and obstinately until he was desperate, and then snatch up the ruler and whirl it about the brown head-dress with the consciousness that he could have it off if he liked. It was a good thing to draw it back, and rub his nose very hard with it, if he thought Miss Sally was going to look up, and to recompense himself with more hardy flourishes when he found she was still absorbed. By these means Mr. Swiveller calmed the agitation of his feelings, until his applications to the ruler became less fierce and frequent, and he could even write as many as half-a-dozen consecutive lines without having recourse to it,—which was a great victory.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

In course of time, that is to say, after a couple of hours or so, of diligent application, Miss Brass arrived at the conclusion of her task, and recorded the fact by wiping her pen upon the green gown, and taking a pinch of snuff from a little round tin box which she carried in her pocket. Having disposed of this temperate refreshment, she arose from her stool, tied her papers into a formal packet with red tape, and taking them under her arm, marched out of the office.

Mr. Swiveller had scarcely sprung off his seat and commenced the performance of a maniac hornpipe, when he was interrupted, in the fulness of his joy at being again alone, by the opening of the door, and the reappearance of Miss Sally's head.

"I am going out," said Miss Brass.

"Very good, ma'am," returned Dick. "And don't hurry yourself on my account to come back, ma'am," he added inwardly.

"If anybody comes on office business, take their messages, and say that the gentleman who attends to that matter isn't in at present, will you?" said Miss Brass.

"I will, ma'am," replied Dick.

"I shan't be very long," said Miss Brass, retiring.

"I'm sorry to hear it, ma'am," rejoined Dick when she had shut the door. "I hope you may be unexpectedly detained, ma'am. If you could manage to be run over, ma'am, but not seriously, so much the better."

Uttering these expressions of good will with extreme gravity, Mr. Swiveller sat down in the client's chair and pondered; then took a few turns up and down the room and fell into the chair again.

"So I'm Brass's clerk, am I?" said Dick. "Brass's clerk, eh? And the clerk of Brass's sister — clerk to a female Dragon. Very good, very good! What shall I be next? Shall I be a convict in a felt hat and a grey suit, trotting about a dockyard with my number neatly embroidered on my uniform, and the order of the garter on my leg, restrained from chafing my ancle by a twisted belcher handkerchief? Shall I be that? Will that do, or is it too genteel? Whatever you please, have it your own way of course."

As he was entirely alone, it may be presumed that, in these remarks, Mr. Swiveller addressed himself to his fate or destiny, whom, as we learn by the precedents, it is the custom of heroes to taunt in a very bitter and ironical manner when they find themselves in situations of an unpleasant nature. This is the more probable from the circumstance of Mr. Swiveller directing his observations to the ceiling which these bodiless personages are usually supposed to inhabit, except in theatrical cases, where they live in the heart of the great chandelier.

"Quilp offers me this place which he says he can insure me," resumed Dick after a thoughtful silence, and telling off the circumstances of his position, one by one, upon his fingers;"Fred, who, I could have taken my affidavit, would not have heard of such a thing, backs Quilp to my astonishment, and urges me to take it also—staggerer, number one. My aunt in the country stops the supplies, and writes an affectionate note to say that she has made a new will, and left me out of it—staggerer, number two. No money, no credit, no support from Fred, who seems to turn steady all at once; notice to quit the old lodgings—staggerers three, four, five, and six. Under an accumulation of staggerers, no man can be considered a free agent. No man knocks himself down; if his destiny knocks him down, his destiny must pick him up again. Then I'm very glad that mine has brought all this upon itself, and I shall be as careless as I can, and make myself quite at home to spite it. So, go on, my buck," said Mr. Swiveller, taking his leave of the ceiling with a significant nod, "and let us see which of us will be tired first."

Dismissing the subject of his downfall with these reflections, which were no doubt very profound, and are indeed not altogether unknown in certain systems of moral philosophy, Mr. Swiveller shook off his despondency and assumed the cheerful ease of an irresponsible clerk.

As a means towards his composure and self-possession, he entered into a more minute examination of the office than he had yet had time to make; looked into the wig-box, the books, and ink-bottle; untied and inspected all the papers; carved a few devices on the table with the sharp blade of Mr. Brass's penknife; and wrote his name on the inside of the wooden coal-scuttle. Having, as it were, taken formal possession of his clerkship in virtue of these proceedings, he opened the window and

leaned negligently out of it until a beer-boy happened to pass, whom he commanded to set down his tray and to serve him with a pint of mild porter, which he drank upon the spot and promptly paid for, with the view of breaking ground for a system of future credit, and opening a correspondence tending thereto, without loss of time. Then three or four little boys dropped in on legal errands from three or four attorneys of the Brass grade, whom Mr. Swiveller received and dismissed with about as professional a manner, and as correct and comprehensive an understanding of their business as would have been shown by a clown in a pantomime under similar circumstances. These things done and over, he got upon his stool again and tried his hand at drawing caricatures of Miss Brass with a pen and ink, whistling very cheerfully all the time.

He was occupied in this diversion when a coach stopped near the door, and presently afterwards there was a loud double-knock. As this was no business of Mr. Swiveller's, the person not ringing the office-bell, he pursued his diversion with perfect composure, notwithstanding that he rather thought there was nobody else in the house.

In this, however, he was mistaken; for after the knock had been repeated with increased impatience, the door was opened, and somebody with a very heavy tread went up the stairs and into the room above. Mr. Swiveller was wondering whether this might be another Miss Brass, twin sister to the Dragon, when there came a rapping of knuckles at the office door.

"Come in!" said Dick. "Don't stand upon ceremony. The business will get rather complicated if I've many more customers. Come in!"

"Oh, please," said a little voice very low down in the doorway, "will you come and show the lodgings?"

Dick leaned over the table, and descried a small slipshod girl in a dirty coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet. She might as well have been dressed in a violin-case.

"Why, who are you?" said Dick.

To which the only reply was, "Oh, please will you come and show the lodgings?"

There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick as Dick was amazed at her.

"I haven't got anything to do with the lodgings," said Dick. "Tell 'em to call again."

"Oh, but please will you come and show the lodgings," returned the girl; "it's eighteen shillings a week and us finding plate and linen. Boots and clothes is extra, and fires in winter-time is eightpence a day."

"Why don't you show 'em yourself? You seem to know all about 'em," said Dick.

"Miss Sally said I wasn't to, because people would'nt believe the attendance was good if they saw how small I was first."

"Well, but they'll see how small you are afterwards, won't they?" said Dick.

"Ah! but then they'll have taken 'em for a fortnight certain," replied the child with a shrewd look; "and people don't like moving when they're once settled."

"This is a queer sort of thing," muttered Dick, rising. "What do you mean to say you are—the cook?"

"Yes, I do plain cooking;" replied the child. "I'm housemaid too; I do all the work of the house."

"I suppose Brass and the Dragon and I do the dirtiest part of it," thought Dick. And he might have thought much more, being in a doubtful and hesitating mood, but that the girl again urged her request, and certain mysterious bumping sounds on the passage and staircase seemed to give note of the applicant's impatience. Richard Swiveller, therefore, sticking a pen behind each ear, and carrying another in his mouth as a token of his great importance and devotion to business, hurried out to meet and treat with the single gentleman.

He was a little surprised to perceive that the bumping sounds were occasioned by the progress up-stairs of the single gentleman's trunk, which being nearly twice as wide as the staircase, and exceedingly heavy withal, it was no easy matter for the united exertions of the single gentleman and the coachman to convey up the steep ascent. But there they were, crushing each other, and pushing and pulling with all their might, and getting the trunk tight and fast in all kinds of impassable angles, and to pass them was out of the question; for which sufficient reason, Mr. Swiveller followed slowly behind, entering a new protest on every stair against the house of Mr. Sampson Brass being thus taken by storm.

To these remonstrances, the single gentleman answered not a word, but when the trunk was at last got into the bed-room, sat down upon it and wiped his bald head and face with his handkerchief. He was very warm, and well he might be; for, not to mention the exertion of getting the trunk up stairs, he was closely muffled up in winter garments, though the thermometer had stood all day at eighty-one in the shade.

"I believe, sir," said Richard Swiveller, taking his pen out of his mouth, "that you

desire to look at these apartments. They are very charming apartments, sir. They command an uninterrupted view of—of over the way, and they are within one minute's walk of—of the corner of the street. There is exceeding mild porter, sir, in the immediate vicinity, and the contingent advantages are extraordinary."

"What's the rent?" said the single gentleman.

"One pound per week," replied Dick, improving on the terms.

"I'll take 'em."

"The boots and shoes are extras," said Dick; "and the fires in winter time are—"

"Are all agreed to," answered the single gentleman.

"Two weeks, certain," said Dick, "are the—"

"Two weeks!" cried the single gentleman, gruffly, eyeing him from top to toe. "Two years. I shall live here for two years. Here—ten pounds down. The bargain's made."

"Why, you see," said Dick, "my name's not Brass, and—"

"Who said it was? *My* name's not Brass. What then?"

"The name of the master of the house is," said Dick.

"I'm glad of it," returned the single gentleman; "it's a good name for a lawyer. Coachman, you may go.—So may you, sir."

Mr. Swiveller was so much confounded by the single gentleman riding rough-shod over him at this rate, that he stood looking at him almost as hard as he had looked at Miss Sally. The single gentleman, however, was not in the slightest degree affected by this circumstance, but proceeded with perfect composure to unwind the shawl which was tied round his neck, and then to pull off his boots. Freed of these encumbrances, he went on to divest himself of his other clothing, which he folded up piece by piece, and ranged in order upon the trunk. Then he pulled down the window-blinds, drew the curtains, wound up his watch, and, quite leisurely and methodically, got into bed.

"Take down the bill," were his parting words, as he looked out from between the curtains; "and let nobody call me till I ring the bell."

With that the curtains closed, and he seemed to snore immediately.

"This is a most remarkable and supernatural sort of house!" said Mr. Swiveller, as he walked into the office with the bill in his hand. "She-dragons in the business, conducting themselves like professional gentlemen; plain cooks of three feet high appearing mysteriously from under ground; strangers walking in and going to bed without leave or license in the middle of the day! If he should be one of the miraculous fellows that turn up now and then, and has gone to sleep for two years, I shall be in a pleasant situation. It's my destiny, however, and I hope Brass may like it. I shall be sorry if he don't. But it's no business of mine—I have nothing whatever to do with it!"

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIFTH.

Mr. Brass on returning home received the report of his clerk with much complacency and satisfaction, and was particular in inquiring after the ten-pound note, which proving on examination to be a good and lawful note of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, increased his good-humour considerably. Indeed he so overflowed with liberality and condescension, that in the fullness of his heart he invited Mr. Swiveller to partake of a bowl of punch with him at that remote and indefinite period, which is currently denominated "one of these days," and paid him many handsome compliments on the uncommon aptitude for business, which his conduct on the first day of his devotion to it had so plainly evinced.

It was a maxim with Mr. Brass that the habit of paying compliments kept a man's tongue oiled without any expense; and, as that useful member ought never to grow rusty or creak in turning on its hinges in the case of a practitioner of the law, in whom it should be always glib and easy, he lost few opportunities of improving himself by the utterance of handsome speeches and eulogistic expressions. And this had passed into such a habit with him, that, if he could not be correctly said to have his tongue at his fingers'-ends, he might certainly be said to have it anywhere but in his face; which, being, as we have already seen, of a harsh and repulsive character, was not oiled so easily, but frowned above all the smooth speeches; one of nature's beacons, warning off those who navigated the shoals and breakers of the World, or of that dangerous strait the Law, and admonishing them to seek less treacherous harbours and try their fortune elsewhere.

While Mr. Brass by turns overwhelmed his clerk with compliments, and inspected the ten-pound note, Miss Sally showed little emotion and that of no pleasurable kind, for as the tendency of her legal practice had been to fix her thoughts on small gains and gripings, and to whet and sharpen her natural wisdom, she was not a little disappointed that the single gentleman had obtained the lodgings at such an easy rate, arguing that when he was seen to have set his mind upon them, he should have been at the least charged double or treble the usual terms, and that, in exact proportion as he pressed forward, Mr. Swiveller should have hung back. But neither the good opinion of Mr. Brass, nor the dissatisfaction of Miss Sally, wrought any impression upon that young gentleman, who, throwing the responsibility of this and all other acts and deeds thereafter to be done by him, upon his unlucky destiny, was quite resigned and comfortable: fully prepared for the worst, and philosophically indifferent to the best.

"Good morning, Mr. Richard," said Brass, on the second day of Mr. Swiveller's clerkship. "Sally found you a second-hand stool, sir, yesterday evening, in Whitechapel. She 's a rare fellow at a bargain, I can tell you, Mr. Richard. You 'll find that a first-rate stool, sir, take my word for it."

"It 's rather a crazy one to look at," said Dick.

"You 'll find it a most amazing stool to sit down upon, you may depend," returned Mr. Brass. "It was bought in the open street, just opposite the hospital, and as it has been standing there a month or two, it has got rather dusty and a little brown from being in the sun, that 's all."

"I hope it hasn't got any fevers or anything of that sort in it," said Dick, sitting himself down discontentedly, between Mr. Sampson and the chaste Sally. "One of the legs is longer than the others."

"Then we get a bit of timber in, sir," retorted Brass. "Ha, ha, ha! We get a bit of timber in, sir, and that 's another advantage of my sister's going to market for us. Miss Brass, Mr. Richard is the——"

"Will you keep quiet!" interrupted the fair subject of these remarks, looking up from her papers. "How am I to work if you keep on chattering!"

"What an uncertain chap you are!" returned the lawyer. "Sometimes you 're all for a chat. At another time you 're all for work. A man never knows what humour he 'll find you in."

"I 'm in a working humour now," said Miss Sally, "so don't disturb me if you please. And don't take him," Miss Sally pointed with the feather of her pen to Richard, "off his business. He won't do more than he can help, I dare say."

Mr. Brass had evidently a strong inclination to make an angry reply, but was deterred by prudent or timid considerations, as he only muttered something about aggravation, and a vagabond; not associating the terms with any individual, but men-

tioning them as connected with some abstract ideas which happened to occur to him. They went on writing for a long time in silence after this—in such a dull silence that Mr. Swiveller (who required excitement) had several times fallen asleep, and written divers strange words in an unknown character with his eyes shut, when Miss Sally at length broke in upon the monotony of the office, by pulling out the little tin box, taking a noisy pinch of snuff, and then expressing her opinion that Mr. Richard Swiveller had "done it."

"Done what, ma'am?" said Richard.

"Do you know," returned Miss Brass, "that the lodger isn't up yet—that nothing has been seen or heard of him since he went to bed yesterday afternoon?"

"Well, ma'am," said Dick, "I suppose he may sleep his ten pound out, in peace and quietness, if he likes."

"Ah! I begin to think he 'll never wake," observed Miss Sally.

"It 's a very remarkable circumstance," said Brass, laying down his pen; "really, very remarkable. Mr. Richard, you 'll remember, if this gentleman should be found to have hung himself to the bed-post, or any unpleasant accident of that kind should happen — you 'll remember, Mr. Richard, that this ten-pound note was given to you in part payment of two years' rent? You 'll bear that in mind, Mr. Richard; you had better make a note of it, sir, in case you should ever be called upon to give evidence."

Mr. Swiveller took a large sheet of foolscap, and with a countenance of profound gravity, began to make a very small note in one corner.

"We can never be too cautious," said Mr. Brass. "There is a deal of wickedness going about the world, a deal of wickedness. Did the gentleman happen to say, sir——but never mind that at present, sir; finish that little memorandum first."

Dick did so, and handed it to Mr. Brass, who had dismounted from his stool and was walking up and down the office.

"Oh, this is the memorandum, is it?" said Brass, running his eye over the document. "Very good. Now, Mr. Richard, did the gentleman say anything else?"

"No."

"Are you sure, Mr. Richard," said Brass, solemnly, "that the gentleman said nothing else?"

"Devil a word, sir," replied Dick.

"Think again, sir," said Brass; "it 's my duty, sir, in the position in which I stand, and as an honourable member of the legal profession, the first profession in this country, sir, or in any other country, or in any of the planets that shine above us at night, and are supposed to be inhabited — it 's my duty, sir, as an honourable member of that profession, not to put to you a leading question in a matter of this delicacy and importance. Did the gentleman, sir, who took the first floor of you yesterday afternoon, and who brought with him a box of property—a box of property—say anything more than is set down in this memorandum?"

"Come, don't be a fool," said Miss Sally.

Dick looked at her, and then at Brass, and then at Miss Sally again, and still said "No."

"Pooh, pooh! Deuce take it, Mr. Richard, how dull you are!" cried Brass, relaxing into a smile. "Did he say anything about his property?—there."

"That 's the way to put it," said Miss Sally, nodding to her brother.

"Did he say, for instance," added Brass, in a kind of comfortable, cozy tone — "I don't assert that he did say so, mind; I only ask you, to refresh your memory—did he say, for instance, that he was a stranger in London — that it was not his humour or within his ability to give any references—that he felt we had a right to require them —and that, in case anything should happen to him, at any time, he particularly desired that whatever property he had upon the premises should be considered mine, as some slight recompense for the trouble and annoyance I should sustain—and were you, in short," added Brass, still more comfortably and cozily than before, "were you induced to accept him on my behalf, as a tenant, upon those conditions?"

"Certainly not," replied Dick.

"Why then, Mr. Richard," said Brass, darting at him a supercilious and reproachful look, "it 's my opinion that you 've mistaken your calling, and will never make a lawyer."

"Not if you live a thousand years," added Miss Sally. Whereupon the brother and sister took each a noisy pinch of snuff from the little tin box, and fell into a gloomy thoughtfulness.

Nothing further passed up to Mr. Swiveller's dinner-time, which was at three o'clock, and seemed about three weeks in coming. At the first stroke of the hour, the new clerk disappeared. At the last stroke of five, he reappeared, and the office, as if by magic, became fragrant with the smell of gin and water, and lemon-peel.

"Mr. Richard," said Brass, "this man 's not up yet. Nothing will wake him, sir. What 's to be done?"

"I should let him have his sleep out," returned Dick.

"Sleep out!" cried Brass; "why he has been asleep now, six-and-twenty hours. We have been moving chests of drawers over his head, we have knocked double knocks at the street-door, we have made the servant-girl fall down stairs several times, (she's a light weight, and it don't hurt her much,) but nothing wakes him."

"Perhaps a ladder," suggested Dick, "and getting in at the first-floor window——"

"But then there's a door between; besides, the neighbourhood would be up in arms," said Brass.

"What do you say to getting on the roof of the house through the trap-door, and dropping down the chimney?" suggested Dick.

"That would be an excellent plan," said Brass, "if anybody would be—" and here he looked very hard at Mr. Swiveller—"would be kind, and friendly, and generous enough, to undertake it. I dare say it would not be anything like as disagreeable as one supposes."

Dick had made the suggestion, thinking that the duty might possibly fall within Miss Sally's department. As he said nothing further, and declined taking the hint, Mr. Brass was fain to propose that they should go up stairs together, and make a last effort to awaken the sleeper by some less violent means, which, if they failed on this last trial, must positively be succeeded by stronger measures. Mr. Swiveller, assenting, armed himself with his stool and the large ruler, and repaired with his employer to the scene of action, where Miss Brass was already ringing a hand-bell with all her might, and yet without producing the smallest effect upon their mysterious lodger.

"There are his boots, Mr. Richard," said Brass.

"Very obstinate-looking articles they are too," quoth Richard Swiveller. And truly they were as sturdy and bluff a pair of boots as one would wish to see; as firmly planted on the ground as if their owner's legs and feet had been in them, and seeming, with their broad soles and blunt toes, to hold possession of their place by main force.

"I can't see anything but the curtain of the bed," said Brass, applying his eye to the keyhole of the door. "Is he a strong man, Mr. Richard?"

"Very," answered Dick.

"It would be an extremely unpleasant circumstance if he was to bounce out suddenly," said Brass. "Keep the stairs clear. I should be more than a match for him of course, but I 'm the master of the house, and the laws of hospitality must be respected.—Hallo there! Hallo, hallo!"

While Mr. Brass, with his eye curiously twisted into the keyhole, uttered these sounds as a means of attracting the lodger's attention, and while Miss Brass plied the hand-bell, Mr. Swiveller put his stool close against the wall by the side of the door, and mounting on the top and standing bolt upright, so that if the lodger did make a rush, he would most probably pass him in its onward fury, began a violent battery with his ruler upon the upper panels of the door. Captivated with his own ingenuity, and confident in the strength of his position, which he had taken up after the method of those hardy individuals who open the pit and gallery doors of theatres on crowded nights, Mr. Swiveller rained down such a shower of blows, that the noise of the bell was drowned; and the small servant, who lingered on the stairs below, ready to fly at a moment's notice, was obliged to hold her ears lest she should be rendered deaf for life.

Suddenly the door was unlocked on the inside, and flung violently open. The small servant fled to the coal-cellar; Miss Sally dived into her own bed-room; Mr. Brass, who was not remarkable for personal courage, ran into the next street, and finding that nobody followed him, armed with a poker or other offensive weapon, put his hands in his pockets, walked very slowly all at once, and whistled.

Meanwhile, Mr. Swiveller, on the top of the stool, drew himself into as flat a shape as possible against the wall, and looked, not unconcernedly, down upon the single gentleman, who appeared at the door growling and cursing in a very awful manner, and, with the boots in his hand, seemed to have an intention of hurling them down stairs on speculation. This idea, however, he abandoned, and he was turning into his room again, still growling vengefully, when his eyes met those of the watchful Richard.

"Have *you* been making that horrible noise?" said the single gentleman.

"I have been helping, sir," returned Dick, keeping his eye upon him, and waving the ruler gently in his right hand, as an indication of what the single gentleman had to expect if he attempted any violence.

"How dare you then," said the lodger, "Eh?"

To this Dick made no other reply than by inquiring whether the lodger held it to be consistent with the conduct and character of a gentleman to go to sleep for six-and-twenty hours at a stretch, and whether the peace of an amiable and virtuous family was to weigh as nothing in the balance.

"Is my peace nothing?" said the single gentleman.

"Is their peace nothing, sir?" returned Dick. "I don't wish to hold out any threats, sir—indeed, the law does not allow of threats, for to threaten is an indictable offence. But if ever you do that again, take care you 're not sat upon by the coroner, and buried in a cross-road before you wake. We have been distracted with fears that you were dead, sir," said Dick, gently sliding to the ground; "and the short and the long of it is, that we cannot allow single gentlemen to come into this establishment and sleep like double gentlemen, without paying extra for it."

"Indeed!" cried the lodger.

"Yes, sir, indeed," returned Dick, yielding to his destiny, and saying whatever came uppermost; "an equal quantity of slumber was never got out of one bed and bedstead; and if you 're going to sleep in that way, you must pay for a double-bedded room."

Instead of being thrown into a greater passion by these remarks, the lodger lapsed into a broad grin, and looked at Mr. Swiveller with twinkling eyes. He was a broad-faced sun-burnt man, and appeared browner and more sun-burnt from having a white night-cap on. As it was clear that he was a choleric fellow in some respects, Mr. Swiveller was relieved to find him in such good humour, and, to encourage him in it, smiled himself.

The lodger, in the testiness of being so rudely roused, had pushed his night-cap very much on one side of his bald head. This gave him a rakish, eccentric air, which, now that he had leisure to observe it, charmed Mr. Swiveller exceedingly; therefore, by way of propitiation, he expressed his hope that the gentleman was going to get up, and further that he would never do so any more.

"Come here, you impudent rascal," was the lodger's answer, as he re-entered his room.

Mr. Swiveller followed him in, leaving the stool outside, but reserving the ruler in case of a surprise. He rather congratulated himself upon his prudence, when the single gentleman, without notice or explanation of any kind, double-locked the door.

"Can you drink any thing?" was his next inquiry.

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had very recently been assuaging the pangs of thirst, but that he was still open to "a modest quencher," if the materials were at hand. Without another word spoken on either side, the lodger took from his great trunk a kind of temple, shining as of polished silver, and placed it carefully on the table.

Greatly interested in his proceedings, Mr. Swiveller observed him closely. Into one little chamber of this temple he dropped an egg, into another some coffee, into a third a compact piece of raw steak from a neat tin case, into a fourth he poured some water. Then, with the aid of a phosphorus-box and some matches, he procured a light, and applied it to a spirit-lamp which had a place of its own below the temple; then he shut down the lids of all the little chambers, then he opened them; and then, by some wonderful and unseen agency, the steak was done, the egg was boiled, the coffee was accurately prepared, and his breakfast was ready.

"Hot water—" said the lodger, handing it to Mr. Swiveller with as much coolness as if he had a kitchen fire before him—"extraordinary rum—sugar—and a travelling glass. Mix for yourself. And make haste."

Dick complied, his eyes wandering all the time from the temple on the table which seemed to do everything, to the great trunk which seemed to hold everything. The lodger took his breakfast like a man who was used to work these miracles, and thought nothing of them.

"The man of the house is a lawyer, is he not?" said the lodger.

Dick nodded. The rum was amazing.

"The woman of the house—what's she?"

"A dragon," said Dick.

The single gentleman, perhaps because he had met with such things in his travels, or perhaps because he *was* a single gentleman, evinced no surprise, but merely inquired "wife or sister?" "Sister," said Dick.—"So much the better," said the single gentleman, "he can get rid of her when he likes."

"I want to do as I like, young man," he added, after a short silence; "to go to bed when I like, get up when I like, come in when I like, go out when I like,—to be asked no questions, and be surrounded by no spies. In this last respect, servants are the devil. There's only one here."

"And a very little one," said Dick.

"And a very little one," repeated the lodger. "Well, the place will suit me, will it?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"Sharks, I suppose?" said the lodger.

Dick nodded assent, and drained his glass.

"Let them know my humour," said the single gentleman, rising. "If they disturb me, they lose a good tenant. If they know me to be that, they know enough. If they try to know more, it's a notice to quit. It's better to understand these things at once. Good day."

"I beg your pardon," said Dick, halting in his passage to the door, which the lodger prepared to open. "When he who adores thee has left but the name—"

"What do you mean?"

"—But the name," said Dick—"in case of letters or parcels—"

"I never have any," returned the lodger.

"Or in case any body should call."

"Nobody ever calls on me."

"If any mistake should arise from not having the name, don't say it was my fault, sir," added Dick, still lingering.—"Oh, blame not the bard—"

"I'll blame nobody," said the lodger, with such irascibility that in a moment Dick found himself on the staircase, and the locked door between them.

Mr. Brass and Miss Sally were lurking hard by, having been, indeed, only routed from the keyhole by Mr. Swiveller's abrupt exit. As their utmost exertions had not enabled them to overhear a word of the interview, however, in consequence of a quarrel for precedence, which, though limited of necessity to pushes and pinches, and such quiet pantomime, had lasted the whole time, they hurried him down to the office to hear his account of the conversation.

This Mr. Swiveller gave them—faithfully, as regarded the wishes and character of the single gentleman, and poetically, as concerned the great trunk, of which he gave a description more remarkable for brilliancy of imagination than a strict adherence to truth; declaring, with many strong asseverations, that it contained a specimen of every kind of rich food and wine, known in these times, and in particular that it was of a self-acting kind, and served up whatever was required, as he supposed, by clock-work. He also gave them to understand that the cooking apparatus roasted a fine piece of sirloin of beef, weighing about six pounds avoirdupoise, in two minutes and a quarter, as he had himself witnessed, and proved by his sense of taste; and further that, however the effect was produced, he had distinctly seen water boil and bubble up when the single gentleman winked; from which facts, he (Mr. Swiveller) was led to infer that the lodger was some great conjuror or chemist, or both, whose residence under that roof could

not fail at some future day to shed great distinction upon the name of Brass, and add a new interest to the history of Bevis Marks.

There was one point which Mr. Swiveller deemed it unnecessary to enlarge upon, and that was the fact of the modest quencher which, by reason of its intrinsic strength and its coming close upon the heels of the temperate beverage he had discussed at dinner, awakened a slight degree of fever, and rendered necessary two or three other modest quenchers at the public house in the course of the evening.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SIXTH.

As the single gentleman, after some weeks' occupation of his lodgings, still declined to correspond by word or gesture either with Mr. Brass or his sister Sally, but invariably chose Richard Swiveller as his channel of communication; and as he proved himself in all respects a highly desirable inmate, paying for everything beforehand, giving very little trouble, making no noise, and keeping early hours; Mr. Richard imperceptibly rose to an important position in the family, as one who had influence over this mysterious lodger, and could negotiate with him, for good or evil, when nobody else durst approach his person.

If the truth must be told, even Mr. Swiveller's approaches to the single gentleman, were of a very distant kind, and met with small encouragement; but as he never returned from a monosyllabic conference with the unknown, without quoting such expressions as "Swiveller, I know I can rely upon you,"—"I have no hesitation in saying, Swiveller, that I entertain a regard for you,"—"Swiveller, you are my friend, and will stand by me I am sure," with many other short speeches of the same familiar and confiding kind, purporting to have been addressed by the single gentleman to himself, and to form the staple of their ordinary discourse, neither Mr. Brass nor Miss Sally for a moment questioned the extent of his influence, but accorded to him their fullest and most unqualified belief.

But quite apart from and independent of this source of popularity, Mr. Swiveller had another, which promised to be equally enduring, and to lighten his position considerably.

He found favour in the eyes of Miss Sally Brass. Let not the light scorners of female fascination erect their ears to listen to a new tale of love which shall serve them for a jest; for Miss Brass, however accurately formed to be beloved, was not of the loving kind. That amiable virgin, having clung to the skirts of the Law from her earliest youth, having sustained herself by their aid, as it were, in her first running alone, and maintained a firm grasp upon them ever since, had passed her life in a kind of legal childhood. She had been remarkable, when a tender prattler, for an uncommon talent in counterfeiting the walk and manner of a bailiff; in which character she had learned to tap her little playfellows on the shoulder, and to carry them off to imaginary sponging-houses, with a correctness of imitation which was the surprise and delight of all who witnessed her performances, and which was only to be exceeded by her exquisite manner of putting an execution into her doll's house, and taking an exact inventory of the chairs and tables. These artless sports had naturally soothed and cheered the decline of her widowed father, a most exemplary gentleman, (called "old Foxey" by his friends from his extreme sagacity,) who encouraged them to the utmost, and whose chief regret on finding that he drew near to Houndsditch churchyard was, that his daughter could not take out an attorney's certificate and hold a place upon the roll. Filled with this affectionate and touching sorrow, he had solemnly confided her to his son Sampson as an invaluable auxiliary, and from the old gentleman's decease to the period of which we treat, Miss Sally Brass had been the prop and pillar of his business.

It is obvious that, having devoted herself from infancy to this one pursuit and study, Miss Brass could know but little of the world, otherwise than in connexion with the law; and that from a lady gifted with such high tastes, proficiency in those gentler and softer arts in which women usually excel, was scarcely to be looked for. Miss Sally's accomplishments were all of a masculine and strictly legal kind. They began with the practice of an attorney and they ended with it. She was in a state of lawful innocence, so to speak. The law had been her nurse, and, as bandy-legs or such physical deformities in children are held to be the consequence of bad nursing, so, if in a mind so beautiful any moral twist or bandiness could be found, Miss Sally Brass's nurse was alone to blame.

It was upon this lady, then, that Mr. Swiveller burst in full freshness as some

thing new and hitherto undreamed of, lighting up the office with scraps of song and merriment, conjuring with inkstands and boxes of wafers, catching three oranges in one hand, balancing stools upon his chin and penknives on his nose, and constantly performing a hundred other feats of equal ingenuity; for with such unbendings did Richard, in Mr. Brass's absence, relieve the tedium of his confinement. These social qualities, which Miss Sally first discovered by accident, gradually made such an impression upon her, that she would entreat Mr. Swiveller to relax as though she were not by, which Mr. Swiveller, nothing loth, would readily consent to do. By these means a friendship sprung up between them. Mr. Swiveller gradually came to look upon her as her brother Sampson did, and as he would have looked upon any other clerk. He imparted to her the mystery of going the odd man or plain Newmarket for fruit, ginger-beer, baked potatoes, or even a modest quencher, of which Miss Brass did not scruple to partake. He would often persuade her to undertake his share of writing in addition to her own; nay, he would sometimes reward her with a hearty slap on the back, and protest that she was a devilish good fellow, a jolly dog, and so forth; all of which compliments Miss Sally would receive in entire good part and with perfect satisfaction.

One circumstance troubled Mr. Swiveller's mind very much, and that was that the small servant always remained somewhere in the bowels of the earth under Bevis Marks, and never came to the surface unless the single gentleman rang his bell, when she would answer it and immediately disappear again. She never went out, or came into the office, or had a clean face, or took off the coarse apron, or looked out of any one of the windows, or stood at the street-door for a breath of air, or had any rest or enjoyment whatever. Nobody ever came to see her, nobody spoke of her, nobody cared about her. Mr. Brass had said once, that he believed she was "a love-child," (which means anything but a child of love,) and that was all the information Richard Swiveller could obtain.

"It's of no use asking the dragon," thought Dick one day, as he sat contemplating the features of Miss Sally Brass. "I suspect if I asked any questions on that head, our alliance would be at an end. I wonder whether she *is* a dragon by the bye, or something in the mermaid way. She has rather a scaly appearance. But mermaids are fond of looking at themselves in the glass, which she can't be. And they have a habit of combing their hair, which she hasn't. No, she's a dragon."

"Where are you going, old fellow?" said Dick aloud, as Miss Sally wiped her pen as usual on the green dress, and uprose from her seat.

"To dinner," answered the dragon.

"To dinner!" thought Dick, "that's another circumstance. I don't believe that small servant ever has anything to eat."

"Sammy won't be home," said Miss Brass. "Stop till I come back. I shan't be long."

Dick nodded, and followed Miss Brass with his eyes to the door, and with his ears to a little back parlour, where she and her brother took their meals.

"Now," said Dick, walking up and down with his hands in his pockets, "I'd give something—if I had it—to know how they use that child, and where they keep her. My mother must have been a very inquisitive woman; I have no doubt I'm marked with a note of interrogation somewhere. My feelings I smother, but thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my—upon my word," said Mr. Swiveller, checking himself and falling thoughtfully into the client's chair, "I should like to know how they use her!"

After running on in this way for some time, Mr. Swiveller softly opened the office-door, with the intention of darting across the street for a glass of the mild porter. At that moment he caught a parting glimpse of the brown head-dress of Miss Brass flitting down the kitchen stairs "And by Jove!" thought Dick, "she's going to feed the servant. Now or never!"

First peeping over the handrail and allowing the head-dress to disappear in the darkness below, he groped his way down, and arrived at the door of a back kitchen immediately after Miss Brass had entered the same, bearing in her hand a cold leg of mutton. It was a very dark miserable place, very low, and very damp, the walls disfigured by a thousand rents and blotches. The water was trickling out of a leaky butt, and a most wretched cat was lapping up the drops with the sickly eagerness of starvation. The grate, which was a wide one, was wound and screwed up tight, so as to hold no more than a little thin sandwich of fire. Everything was locked up; the coal-cellar, the candle-box, the salt-box, the meat-safe, were all padlocked. There was nothing that a beetle could have lunched upon. The pinched and meagre aspect of the place would have killed a chameleon. He would have known at the first mouthful that the air was not eatable, and must have given up the ghost in despair.—The small servant stood with humility in presence of Miss Sally, and hung her head

"Are you there?" said Miss Sally.

"Yes, ma'am," was the answer in a weak voice.

"Go further away from the leg of mutton or you'll be picking it, I know," said Miss Sally.

The girl withdrew into a corner, while Miss Brass took a key from her pocket, and opening the safe, brought from it a dreary waste of cold potatoes, looking as eatable as Stonehenge. This she placed before the small servant, ordering her to sit down before it, and then, taking up a great carving-knife, made a mighty show of sharpening it upon the carving-fork.

"Do you see this?" said Miss Brass, slicing off about two square inches of cold mutton after all this preparation, and holding it out on the point of the fork.

The small servant looked hard enough at it with her hungry eyes to see every shred of it, small as it was, and answered, "yes."

"Then don't you ever go and say," retorted Miss Sally, "that you hadn't meat here. There, eat it up."

This was soon done. "Now, do you want any more?" said Miss Sally.

The hungry creature answered with a faint, "No." They were evidently going through an established form.

"You've been helped once to meat," said Miss Brass, summing up the facts; 'you have had as much as you can eat, you re asked if you want any more, and you answer, 'no!' Then don't you ever go and say you were allowanced, mind that."

With those words, Miss Sally put the meat away and locked the safe, and then drawing near to the small servant, overlooked her while she finished the potatoes.

It was plain that some extraordinary grudge was working in Miss Brass's gentle breast, and that it was this which impelled her, without the smallest present cause, to rap the child with the blade of the knife, now on her hand, now on her head, and now on her back, as if she found it quite impossible to stand so close to her without administering a few slight knocks. But Mr. Swiveller was not a little surprised to see his fellow-clerk, after walking slowly backwards towards the door as if she were trying to withdraw herself from the room, but could not accomplish it, dart suddenly forward, and falling on the small servant, give her some hard blows with her clenched hand. The victim cried, but in a subdued manner as if she feared to raise her voice, and Miss Sally, comforting herself with a pinch of snuff, ascended the stairs, just as Richard had safely reached the office.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SEVENTH.

The single gentleman, among his other peculiarities—and he had a very plentiful stock, of which he every day furnished some new specimen—took a most extraordinary and remarkable interest in the exhibition of Punch. If the sound of a Punch's voice, at ever so remote a distance, reached Bevis Marks, the single gentleman, though in bed and asleep, would start up, and hurrying on his clothes, make for the spot with all speed, and presently return at the head of a long procession of idlers, having in the midst the theatre and its proprietors. Straightway, the stage would be set up in front of Mr. Brass's house; the single gentleman would establish himself at the first floor window; and the entertainment would proceed with all its exciting accompaniments of fife and drum and shout, to the excessive consternation of all sober votaries of business in that silent thoroughfare. It might have been expected that when the play was done, both players and audience would have dispersed; but the epilogue was as bad as the play, for no sooner was the Devil dead, than the manager of the puppets and his partner were summoned by the single gentleman to his chamber, where they were regaled with strong waters from his private store, and where they held with him long conversations, the purport of which no human being could fathom. But the secret of these discussions was of little importance. It was sufficient to know that while they were proceeding, the concourse without still lingered round the house; that boys beat upon the drum with their fists, and imitated Punch with their tender voices; that the office window was rendered opaque by flattened noses, and the key-hole of the street-door luminous with eyes; that every time the single gentleman or either of his guests was seen at the upper window, or so much as the end of one of their noses was visible, there was a great shout of execration from the excluded mob, who remained howling and yelling, and refusing consolation, until the exhibitors were delivered up to them to be attended elsewhere. It was sufficient, in short, to know that Bevis Marks was revolutionized by these popular movements, and that peace and quietness fled from its precincts.

Nobody was rendered more indignant by these proceedings than Mr. Sampson Brass, who, as he could by no means afford to lose so profitable an inmate, deemed it prudent to pocket his lodger's affront along with his cash, and to annoy the audiences who clustered round his door by such imperfect means of retaliation as were open to him, and which were confined to the trickling down of foul water on their heads from unseen watering pots, pelting them with fragments of tile and mortar from the roof of the house, and bribing the drivers of hackney cabriolets to come suddenly round the corner and dash in among them precipitately. It may at first sight be matter of surprise to the thoughtless few, that Mr. Brass, being a professional gentleman, should not have legally indicted some party or parties active in the promotion of the nuisance; but they will be good enough to remember that as Doctors seldom take their own prescriptions, and Divines do not always practise what they preach, so lawyers are shy of meddling with the Law on their own account, knowing it to be an edged tool of uncertain application, very expensive in the working, and rather remarkable for its properties of close shaving, than for its always shaving the right person.

"Come," said Mr. Brass, one afternoon, "this is two days without a Punch. I'm in hopes he has run through 'em all, at last."

"Why are you in hopes!" returned Miss Sally. "What harm do they do!"

"Here's a pretty sort of fellow!" cried Brass, laying down his pen in despair. "Now here's an aggravating animal!"

"Well, what harm do they do?" retorted Sally.

"What harm!" cried Brass. "Is it no harm to have a constant hallooing and hooting under one's very nose, distracting one from business, and making one grind one's teeth with vexation? Is it no harm to be blinded and choked up, and have the king's highway stopped, with a set of screamers and roarers, whose throats must be made of—of—"

"Brass," suggested Mr. Swiveller.

"Ah! of brass," said the lawyer, glancing at his clerk, to assure himself that he had suggested the word in good faith and without any sinister intention. "Is that no harm?"

The lawyer stopped short in his invective, and listening for a moment, and recognising the well-known voice, rested his head upon his hand, raised his eyes to the ceiling, and muttered faintly, "There's another!"

Up went the single gentleman's window directly.

"There's another," repeated Brass; "and if I could get a break and four blood horses to cut into the Marks when the crowd is at its thickest, I'd give eighteen pence and never grudge it."

The distant squeak was heard again. The single gentleman's door burst open. He ran violently down the stairs, out into the street, and so past the window, without any hat, towards the quarter whence the sound proceeded—bent, no doubt, upon securing the stranger's services directly.

"I wish I only knew who his friends were," muttered Sampson, filling his pocket with papers; "if they'd just get up a pretty little Commission *de lunatico* at the Gray's Inn Coffee House, and give me the job, I'd be content to have the lodgings empty for one while, at all events."

With which words, and knocking his hat over his eyes, as if for the purpose of shutting out even a glimpse of the dreadful visitation, Mr. Brass rushed from the house and hurried away.

As Mr. Swiveller was decidedly favourable to these performances, upon the ground that looking at a Punch, or indeed looking at anything out of window, was better than working, and as he had been for this reason at some pains to awaken in his fellow clerk a sense of their beauties and manifold deserts, both he and Miss Sally rose as with one accord, and took up their positions at the window: upon the sill whereof, as in a post of honour, sundry young ladies and gentlemen who were employed in the dry nurture of babies, and who made a point of being present, with their young charges, on such occasions, had already established themselves as comfortably as the circumstances would allow.

The glass being dim, Mr. Swiveller, agreeably to a friendly custom which he had established between them, hitched off the brown head-dress from Miss Sally's head, and dusted it carefully therewith. By the time he had handed it back, and its beautiful wearer had put it on again (which she did with perfect composure and indifference), the lodger returned with the show and showmen at his heels, and a strong addition to the body of spectators. The exhibiter disappeared with all speed behind the drapery, and his partner, stationing himself by the side of the Theatre, surveyed the audience with a remarkable expression of melancholy; which became more remarkable still, when he breathed a hornpipe tune into that sweet musical instrument which is popularly termed a mouth-organ, without at all changing the mournful expression of the upper part of his face, though his mouth and chin were, of necessity, in lively spasms.

The drama proceeded to its close, and held the spectators enchained in the customary manner. The sensation which kindles in large assemblies, when they are relieved from a state of breathless suspense, and are again free to speak and move, was yet ripe, when the lodger, as usual, summoned the man up stairs.

"Both of you," he called from the window; for only the actual exhibiter—a little fat man—prepared to obey the summons. "I want to talk to you. Come, both of you."

"Come, Tommy," said the little man.

"I an't a talker," replied the other. "Tell him so. What should I go and talk for?"

"Don't you see the gentleman's got a bottle and glass up there?" returned the little man.

"And couldn't you have said so at first?" retorted the other, with sudden alacrity. "Now, what are you waiting for? Are you going to keep the gentleman expecting us all day? haven't you *no* manners?"

With this remonstrance, the melancholy man, who was no other than Mr. Thomas Codlin, pushed past his friend and brother in the craft, Mr. Harris, otherwise Short or Trotters, and hurried before him to the single gentleman's apartment.

"Now, my men," said the single gentleman; "you have done very well. What will you take? Tell that little man behind to shut the door."

"Shut the door, can't you?" said Mr. Codlin, turning gruffly to his friend. "You might have knowed that the gentleman wanted the door shut, without being told, I think."

Mr. Short obeyed, observing under his breath that his friend seemed unusually "cranky," and expressing a hope that there was no dairy in the neighbourhood, or his temper would certainly spoil its contents.

The gentleman pointed to a couple of chairs, and intimated, by an emphatic nod of his head, that he expected them to be seated. Messrs. Codlin and Short, after looking at each other with considerable doubt and indecision, at length sat down—each on the extreme edge of the chair pointed out to him—and held their hats very tight, while the single gentleman filled a couple of glasses from a bottle on the table beside him, and presented them in due form.

"You're pretty well browned by the sun, both of you," said the entertainer. "Have you been travelling?"

Mr. Short replied in the affirmative, with a nod and a smile. Mr. Codlin added a corroborative nod and a short groan, as

if he still felt the weight of the Temple upon his shoulders.

"To fairs, markets, races, and so forth, I suppose?" pursued the single gentleman.

"Yes sir," returned Short, "pretty nigh all over the West of England."

"I have talked to men of your craft from North, East, and South," returned their host, in rather a hasty manner; "but I never lighted on any from the West before."

"It's our reg'lar summer circuit is the West, master," said Short: "that's where it is. We take the East of London in the spring and winter, and the West of England in the summer time. Many's the hard day's walking in rain and mud, and with never a penny earned, we've had down in the West."

"Let me fill your glass again."

"Much obleeged to you, sir, I think I will," said Mr. Codlin, suddenly thrusting in his own and turning Short's aside. "I'm the sufferer, sir, in all the travelling, and in all the staying at home. In town or country, wet or dry, hot or cold, Tom Codlin suffers. But Tom Codlin isn't to complain for all that. Oh, no. Short may complain, but if Codlin grumbles by so much as a word—oh dear, down with him, down with *him* directly. It isn't *his* place to grumble. That's quite out of the question."

"Codlin an't without his usefulness," observed Short, with an arch look; "but he don't always keep his eyes open. He falls asleep, sometimes, you know. Remember them last races, Tommy."

"Will you never leave off aggravating a man?" said Codlin. "It's very likely I was asleep when five-and-tenpence was collected, in one round, isn't it? I was attending to my business, and couldn't have my eyes in twenty places at once, like a peacock, no more than you could. If I an't a match for an old man and a young child, you an't neither, so don't throw that out against me, for the cap fits your head quite as correct as it fits mine."

"You may as well drop the subject, Tom," said Short. "It isn't particular agreeable to the gentleman, I dare say."

"Then you shouldn't have brought it up," returned Mr. Codlin; "and I ask the gentleman's pardon on your account, as a giddy chap that likes to hear himself talk, and don't care much what he talks about, so that he does talk."

Their entertainer had sat perfectly quiet in the beginning of this dispute, looking first at one man and then at the other, as if he were lying in wait for an opportunity of putting some further question, or reverting to that from which the discourse had strayed. But from the point where Mr Codlin was charged with sleepiness, he had

shown an increasing interest in the discussion, which now attained a very high pitch.

"You are the two men I want," he said; "the two men I have been looking for, and searching after. Where are that old man and that child you speak of?"

"Sir?" said Short, hesitating and looking towards his friend.

"The old man and his grandchild who travelled with you—where are they? It will be worth your while to speak out, I assure you; much better worth your while than you believe. They left you, you say, at those races, as I understand. They have been traced to that place, and there lost sight of. Have you no clue,—can you suggest no clue, to their recovery?"

"Did I always say, Thomas,"—cried Short, turning with a look of amazement to his friend, "that there was sure to be an inquiry after them two travellers?"

"*You* said!" returned Mr. Codlin.—"Did I always say that, that 'ere blessed child was the most interesting I ever see? Did I always say I loved her, and doted on her? Pretty creetur, I think I hear ner now. 'Codlin's my friend,' she says, with a tear of gratitude a trickling down her little eye; 'Codlin's my friend,' she says—'not Short. Short's very well,' she says; 'I've no quarrel with Short; he means to be kind, I dare say; but Codlin,' she says, 'has the feelings for my money, though he mayn't look it.'"

Repeating these words with great emotion, Mr. Codlin rubbed the bridge of his nose with his coat-sleeve, and shaking his head mournfully from side to side, left the single gentleman to infer that, from the moment when he lost sight of his dear young charge, his peace of mind and happiness had fled.

"Good God!" said the single gentleman, pacing up and down the room, "have I found these men, at last, only to discover that they can give me no information or assistance? It would have been better to have lived on in hope, from day to day, and never to have lighted on them, than to have my expectations scattered."

"Stay a minute," said Short. "A man of the name of Jerry—you know Jerry, Thomas?"

"Oh, don't talk to me of Jerrys," replied Mr. Codlin. "How can I care a pinch of snuff for Jerrys, when I think of that 'ere darling child! 'Codlin's my friend,' she says, 'dear, good, kind Codlin, as is always a devising pleasures for me! I don't object to Short,' she says, 'but I cotton to Codlin.' Once," said that gentleman, reflectively, "she called me Father Codlin. I thought I should have bust!"

"A man of the name of Jerry, sir," said Short, turning from his selfish colleague to their new acquaintance, "wot keeps a company of dancing dogs, told me in a accidental sort of way, that he had seen the old gentleman in connexion with a travelling wax-work, unbeknown to him. As they'd given us the slip, and nothing had come of it, and this was down in the country that he'd been seen, I took no measures about it, and asked no questions—but I can, if you like."

"Is this man in town?" said the impatient single gentleman. "Speak faster."

"No, he isn't, but he will be to-morrow, for he lodges in our house," replied Mr. Short, rapidly.

"Then bring him here," said the single gentleman. "Here's a sovereign apiece. If I can find these people through your means, it is but a prelude to twenty more. Return to me to-morrow, and keep your own counsel upon this subject—though I need hardly tell you that, for you'll do so for your own sakes. Now, give me your address, and leave me."

The address was given, the two men departed, and the crowd went with them, and the single gentleman for two mortal hours walked in uncommon agitation up and down his room, over the wondering heads of Mr. Richard Swiveller and Miss Sally Brass.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-EIGHTH.

Kit—for it happens at this juncture, not only that we have breathing-time to follow his fortunes, but that the necessities of these adventures so adapt themselves to our ease and inclination as to call upon us imperatively to pursue the track we most desire to take — Kit, while the matters treated of in the last fifteen chapters were yet in progress, was, as the reader may suppose, gradually familiarizing himself more and more, with Mr. and Mrs. Garland, Mr. Abel, the pony, and Barbara, and gradually coming to consider them one and all as his particular private friends, and Abel Cottage, Finchley, as his own proper home.

Stay — the words are written, and may go; but if they convey any notion that Kit, in the plentiful board and comfortable lodging of his new abode, began to think slightingly of the poor fare and furniture of his old dwelling, they do their office badly and commit injustice. Who so mindful of those he left at home — albeit they were but a mother and two young babies — as Kit? What boastful father, in the fulness of his heart, ever related such wonders of his infant prodigy, as Kit never wearied of telling Barbara, in the evening time, concerning little Jacob! Was there ever such a mother as Kit's mother, on her son's showing? or was there ever such comfort in poverty as in the poverty of Kit's family, if any correct judgment might be arrived at from his own glowing account!

And let us linger in this place, for an instant, to remark that if ever household affections and loves are graceful things, they are graceful in the poor. The ties that bind the wealthy and the proud to home, may be forged on earth; but those which link the poor man to his humble hearth, are of the true metal, and bear the stamp of Heaven. The man of high descent may love the halls and lands of his inheritance as a part of himself, as trophies of his birth and power; his associations with them are associations of pride and wealth and triumph: the poor man's attachment to the tenement he holds, which strangers have held before, and may to-morrow occupy again, has a worthier root, struck deep into a purer soil. His household gods are of flesh and blood, with no alloy of silver, gold, or precious stone: he has no property but in the affections of his own heart; and when they endear bare floors and walls, despite of rags and toil and scanty meals, that man has his love of home from God, and his rude hut becomes a solemn place.

Oh! if those who rule the destinies of nations would but remember this,—if they would but think how hard it is for the very poor to have engendered in their hearts that love of home from which all domestic virtues spring, when they live in dense and squalid masses where social decency is lost, or rather never found,—if they would but turn aside from the wide thoroughfares and great houses, and strive to improve the wretched dwellings in bye-ways where only Poverty may walk,—many low roofs would point more truly to the sky, than the loftiest steeple that now rears proudly up from the midst of guilt, and crime, and horrible disease, to mock them by its contrast. In hollow voices from Workhouse, Hospital, and Jail, this truth is preached from day to day, and has been proclaimed for years. It is no light matter—no outcry from the working vulgar, no mere question of the people's health and comforts that may be whistled down on Wednesday nights. In love of home, the love of country has its rise; and who are truer patriots or the best in time of need—those who venerate the land, owning its wood, and stream, and earth, and all that they produce, or those who love their country, boasting not a foot of ground in all its wide domain?

Kit knew nothing about such questions, but he knew that his old home was a very poor place, and that his new one was very unlike it; and yet he was constantly looking back with grateful satisfaction and affectionate anxiety, and often indited square-folded letters to his mother, inclosing a shilling or eighteen-pence, or such other small remittance, which Mr. Abel's liberality enabled him to make. Sometimes, being in the neighbourhood, he had leisure to call upon her; and then great was the joy and pride of Kit's mother, and extremely noisy the satisfaction of little Jacob and the baby, and cordial the congratulations of the whole court, who listened with admiring ears to the accounts of Abel Cottage, and could never be told too much of its wonders and magnificence.

Although Kit was in the very highest favour with the old lady and gentleman, and Mr. Abel, and Barbara, it is certain that no member of the family evinced such a remarkable partiality for him as the self-willed pony, who, from being the most obstinate and opinionated pony on the face of the earth, was, in his hands, the meekest and most tractable of animals. It is true, that in exact proportion as he became manageable by Kit, he became utterly ungovernable by anybody else (as if he had determined to keep him in the family at all risks and hazards), and that, even under the guidance of his favourite, he would sometimes perform a great variety of strange freaks and capers, to the extreme discomposure of the old lady's nerves; but as Kit always represented that this was only his fun, or a way he had of showing his attachment to his employers, Mrs. Garland gradually suffered herself to be persuaded into the belief, in which she at last became so strongly confirmed, that if, in one of these ebullitions, he had overturned the chaise, she would have been quite satisfied that he did it with the very best intentions.

Besides becoming in a short time a perfect marvel in all stable matters, Kit soon made himself a very tolerable gardener, a handy fellow within doors, and an indispensable attendant on Mr. Abel, who every day gave him some new proof of his confidence and approbation. Mr. Witherden, the notary, too, regarded him with a friendly eye; and even Mr. Chuckster would sometimes condescend to give him a slight nod, or to honour him with that peculiar form of recognition which is called "taking a sight," or to favour him with some other salute combining pleasantry with patronage.

One morning Kit drove Mr. Abel to the Notary's office, as he sometimes did, and having set him down at the house, was about to drive off to a livery stable hard by, when this same Mr. Chuckster emerged from the office-door, and cried "Woa-a-a-a-a-a"—dwelling upon the note a long

time, for the purpose of striking terror into the pony's heart, and asserting the supremacy of man over the inferior animals.

"Pull up, Snobby," cried Mr. Chuckster, addressing himself to Kit. "You're wanted inside here."

"Has Mr. Abel forgotten anything, I wonder?" said Kit, as he dismounted.

"Ask no questions, Snobby," returned Mr. Chuckster, "but go and see. Woa-a-a then, will you? If that pony was mine, *I*'d break him."

"You must be very gentle with him, if you please," said Kit, "or you'll find him troublesome. You'd better not keep on pulling his ears, please. I know he won't like it."

To this remonstrance Mr. Chuckster deigned no other answer, than addressing Kit with a lofty and distant air as "young feller," and requesting him to cut, and come again with all speed. The "young feller" complying, Mr. Chuckster put his hands in his pockets, and tried to look as if he were not minding the pony, but happened to be lounging there by accident.

Kit scraped his shoes very carefully, (for he had not yet lost his reverence for the bundles of papers and the tin boxes,) and tapped at the office-door, which was quickly opened by the Notary himself.

"Oh! come in, Christopher," said Mr. Witherden.

"Is that the lad?" asked an elderly gentleman, but of a stout, bluff figure—who was in the room.

"That's the lad," said Mr. Witherden. "He fell in with my client, Mr. Garland, sir, at this very door. I have reason to think he is a good lad, sir, and that you may believe what he says. Let me introduce Mr. Abel Garland, sir — his young master; my articled pupil, sir, and most particular friend. My most particular friend, sir," repeated the Notary, drawing out his silk handkerchief and flourishing it about his face.

"Your servant, sir," said the stranger gentleman.

"Yours, sir, I'm sure," replied Mr. Abel, mildly. "You were wishing to speak to Christopher, sir?"

"Yes, I was. Have I your permission?"

"By all means."

"My business is no secret; or I should rather say, it need be no secret *here*," said the stranger, observing that Mr. Abel and the Notary were preparing to retire. "It relates to a dealer in curiosities with whom he lived, and in whom I am earnestly and warmly interested. I have been a stranger to this country, gentlemen, for very many years, and if I am deficient in form and ceremony, I hope you will forgive me."

"No forgiveness is necessary, sir;—none whatever," replied the Notary, and so said Mr. Abel.

"I have been making inquiries in the neighbourhood in which his old master lived," said the stranger, "and I learnt that he had been served by this lad. I found out his mother's house, and was directed by her to this place as the nearest in which I should be likely to find him. That's the cause of my presenting myself here this morning."

"I am very glad of any cause, sir," said the Notary, "which procures me the honour of this visit."

"Sir," retorted the stranger, "you speak like a mere man of the world, and I think you something better. Therefore, pray do not sink your real character in paying unmeaning compliments to me."

"Hem!" coughed the Notary. "You're a plain speaker, sir."

"And a plain dealer," returned the stranger. "It may be my long absence and inexperience that lead me to the conclusion, but if plain speakers are scarce in this part of the world, I fancy that plain dealers are still scarcer. If my speaking should offend you, sir, my dealing, I hope, will make amends."

Mr. Witherden seemed a little disconcerted by the elderly gentleman's mode of conducting the dialogue; and as for Kit, he looked at him in open-mouthed astonishment, wondering what kind of language he would address to him, if he talked in that free and easy way to a Notary. It was with no harshness, however, though with something of constitutional irritability and haste, that he turned to Kit and said:

"If you think, my lad, that I am pursuing these inquiries with any other view than that of serving and reclaiming those I am in search of, you do me a very great wrong, and deceive yourself. Don't be deceived, I beg of you, but rely upon my assurance. The fact, is, gentlemen," he added, turning again to the Notary and his pupil, "that I am in a very painful and wholly unexpected position. I came to this city with a darling object at my heart, expecting to find no obstacle or difficulty in the way of its attainment. I find myself suddenly checked and stopped short in the execution of my design, by a mystery which I cannot penetrate. Every effort I have made to penetrate it, has only served to render it darker and more obscure; and I am afraid to stir openly in the matter, lest those whom I anxiously pursue, should fly still further from me. I assure you that if you could give me any assistance, you would not be sorry to do so, if you knew how greatly I stand

in need of it, and what a load it would relieve me from!"

There was a simplicity in this confidence which occasioned it to find a quick response in the breast of the good-natured Notary, who replied, in the same spirit, that the stranger had not mistaken his desire, and that if he could be of service to him, he would most readily.

Kit was then put under examination, and closely questioned by the unknown gentleman, touching his old master and the child, their lonely way of life, their retired habits, and strict seclusion. The nightly absence of the old man, the solitary existence of the child at those times, his illness and recovery, Quilp's possession of the house, and their sudden disappearance, were all the subjects of much questioning and answer. Finally, Kit informed the gentleman that the premises were now to let, and that a board upon the door referred all inquirers to Mr. Sampson Brass, Solicitor, of Bevis Marks, from whom he might perhaps learn some further particulars.

"Not by inquiry," said the gentleman, shaking his head. "I live there."

"Live at Brass's, the attorney's!" cried Mr. Witherden, in some surprise, having professional knowledge of the gentleman in question.

"Ay," was the reply. "I entered upon his lodgings t'other day, chiefly because I had seen this very board. It matters little to me where I live, and I had a desperate hope that some intelligence might be cast in my way there, which would not reach me elsewhere. Yes, I live at Brass's—more shame for me, I suppose?"

"That's a mere matter of opinion," said the Notary, shrugging his shoulders.—"He is looked upon as rather a doubtful character."

"Doubtful?" echoed the other. "I am glad to hear there's any doubt about it. I supposed that had been thoroughly settled, long ago. But will you let me speak a word or two with you in private?"

Mr. Witherden consenting, they walked into that gentleman's private closet, and remained there in close conversation for some quarter of an hour, when they returned into the outer office. The stranger had left his hat in Mr. Witherden's room, and seemed to have established himself, in this short interval, on quite a friendly footing.

"I'll not detain you any longer, now," he said, putting a crown into Kit's hand, and looking towards the Notary. "You shall hear from me again. Not a word of this, you know, except to your master and mistress.

"Mother, sir, would be glad to know—" said Kit, faltering.

"Glad to know what?"

"Anything—so that it was no harm—about Miss Nell."

"Would she? Well, then, you may tell her, if she can keep a secret. But mind, not a word of this to anybody else. Don't forget that. Be particular."

"I'll take care, sir," said Kit. "Thankee sir, and good morning."

Now, it happened that the gentleman, in his anxiety to impress upon Kit that he was not to tell anybody what had passed between them, followed him out to the door to repeat his caution, and it further happened that at that moment the eyes of Mr. Richard Swiveller were turned in that direction, and beheld his mysterious friend and Kit together.

It was quite an accident, and the way in which it came about was this. Mr. Chuckster being a gentleman of a cultivated taste and a refined spirit, was one of that Lodge of Glorious Apollos, whereof Mr. Swiveller was Perpetual Grand. Mr. Swiveller passing through the street in the execution of some Brazen errand, and beholding one of his Glorious Brotherhood intently gazing on a pony, crossed over to give him that fraternal greeting with which Perpetual Grands are by the very constitution of their office bound to cheer and encourage their disciples. He had scarcely bestowed upon him his blessing, and followed it with a general remark touching the present state and prospects of the weather, when lifting his eyes, he beheld the single gentleman of Bevis Marks in earnest conversation with Christopher Nubbles.

"Hallo!" said Dick, "who *is* that?"

"He called to see my Governor this morning," replied Mr Chuckster, "and beyond that I don't know him from Adam."

"At least you know his name?" said Dick.

To which Mr. Chuckster replied, with an elevation of speech becoming a Glorious Apollo, that he was "everlastingly blessed" if he did.

"All I know, my dear feller," said Mr. Chuckster, running his fingers through his hair, "is, that he is the cause of my having stood here twenty minutes, for which I hate him with a mortal and undying hatred, and would pursue him to the confines of eternity, if I could afford the time."

While they were thus discoursing, the subject of their conversation (who had not appeared to recognise Mr. Richard Swiveller) re-entered the house, and Kit came down the steps and joined them; to whom Mr. Swiveller again propounded his enquiry with no better success.

"He is a very nice gentleman, sir," said Kit, "and that's all *I* know about him."

Mr. Chuckster waxed wroth at this answer, and without applying the remark to any particular case, mentioned as a general truth, that it was expedient to break the heads of Snobs, and to tweak their noses. Without expressing his concurrence in this sentiment, Mr. Swiveller, after a few moments of abstraction, inquired which way Kit was driving, and being informed, declared it was his way, and that he would trespass on him for a lift. Kit would gladly have declined the proffered honour, but as Mr. Swiveller was already established in the seat beside him, he had no means of doing so otherwise than by a forcible ejectment, and therefore drove briskly off — so briskly indeed as to cut short the leave-taking between Mr. Chuckster and his Grand Master, and to occasion the former gentleman some inconvenience from having his corns squeezed by the impatient pony.

As Whisker was tired of standing, and Mr. Swiveller was kind enough to stimulate him still further by shrill whistles, and various sporting cries, they rattled off at too sharp a pace to admit of much conversation, especially as the pony, incensed by Mr. Swiveller's admonitions, took a particular fancy for the lamp-posts and cart-wheels, and evinced a strong desire to run on the pavement and rasp himself against brick walls. It was not, therefore, until they had arrived at the stable, and the chaise had been extricated from a very small doorway into which the pony dragged it under the impression that he could take it along with him into his usual stall, that Mr. Swiveller found time to talk.

"It's hard work," said Richard. "What do you say to some beer?"

Kit at first declined, but presently consented, and they adjourned to the neighbouring bar together.

"We'll drink our friend what's-his-name," said Dick, holding up the bright frothy pot; "— that was talking to you this morning, you know — *I* know him — a good fellow, but eccentric — very — here's what's-his-name."

Kit pledged him.

"He lives in my house," said Dick; "at least in the house occupied by the firm in which I'm a sort of a — of a managing partner; a difficult fellow to get anything out of; but we like him, we like him."

"I must be going, sir, if you please," said Kit, moving away.

"Don't be in a hurry, Christopher," replied his patron; we'll drink your mother."

"Thank you, sir."

"An excellent woman that mother of yours, Christopher," said Mr. Swiveller. "'Who ran to catch me when I fell, and kissed the place to make it well? My Mother.' A charming woman. He's a liberal sort of fellow. We must get him to do something *for* your mother. Does he know her, Christopher?"

Kit shook his head, and glancing slyly at his questioner, thanked him, and made off before he could say another word.

"Humph!" said Mr. Swiveller, pondering; "this is queer. Nothing but mysteries in connexion with Brass's house. I'll keep my own counsel, however. Everybody and anybody has been in my confidence as yet; but now I think I'll set up in business for myself. Queer, very queer!"

After pondering deeply, and with a face of exceeding wisdom, for some time, Mr. Swiveller drank some more of the beer, and summoning a small boy who had been watching his proceedings, poured forth the few remaining drops as a libation upon the gravel, and bade him carry the empty vessel to the bar, with his compliments, and above all things to lead a sober and temperate life, and abstain from all intoxicating and exciting liquors. Having given him this piece of moral advice for his trouble (which, as he wisely observed, was far better than half-pence), the Perpetual Grand Master of the Glorious Apollos thrust his hands into his pockets and sauntered away; still pondering as he went.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-NINTH.

All that day, though he waited for Mr. Abel until evening, Kit kept clear of his mother's house, determined not to anticipate, by the slightest approach, the pleasures of the morrow, but to let them come in their full rush of delight; for to-morrow was the great and long looked-for epoch in his life; to-morrow was the end of his first quarter—the day of receiving, for the first time, one fourth part of his annual income of Six Pounds, in one vast sum of Thirty Shillings; to-morrow was to be a half-holiday devoted to a whirl of entertainments, and little Jacob was to know what oysters meant, and to see a play.

All manner of incidents combined in favour of the occasion: not only had Mr. and Mrs. Garland forewarned him that they intended to make no deduction for his outfit from the great amount, but to pay it him

unbroken in all its gigantic grandeur; not only had the unknown gentleman increased the stock by the sum of five shillings, which was a perfect godsend, and in itself a fortune; not only had these things come to pass, which nobody could have calculated upon, or in their wildest dreams have hoped; but it was Barbara's quarter, too—Barbara's quarter, that very day—and Barbara had a half-holiday as well as Kit, and Barbara's mother was going to make one of the party, and to take tea with Kit's mother, and cultivate her acquaintance.

To be sure, Kit looked out of his window very early that morning to see which way the clouds were flying; and to be sure, Barbara would have been at hers, too, if she had not sat up so late over-night, starching and ironing small pieces of muslin, and crimping them into frills, and sewing them on to other pieces to form magnificent wholes for next day's wear. But they were both up very early for all that, and had small appetites for breakfast and less for dinner, and were in a state of great excitement when Barbara's mother came in with astonishing accounts of the fineness of the weather out of doors (but with a very large umbrella, notwithstanding, for people like Barbara's mother seldom make holiday without one), and when the bell rung for them to go up stairs and receive their quarter's money in gold and silver.

Well, wasn't Mr. Garland kind when he said, "Christopher, here's your money, and you have earned it well;" and wasn't Mrs. Garland kind when she said, "Barbara, here's yours, and I'm much pleased with you;" and didn't Kit sign his name bold to his receipt, and didn't Barbara sign her name all a trembling to hers; and wasn't it beautiful to see how Mrs. Garland poured out Barbara's mother a glass of wine; and didn't Barbara's mother speak up when she said, "Here's blessing you, ma'am, as a good lady, and you, sir, as a good gentleman, and Barbara my love to you, and here's towards you, Mr. Christopher;" and wasn't she as long drinking it as if it had been a tumbler-full; and didn't she look genteel standing there with her gloves on; and wasn't there plenty of laughing and talking among them as they reviewed all these matters upon the top of the coach, and didn't they pity the people who hadn't got a holiday!

But Kit's mother again—wouldn't anybody have supposed she had come of a good stock and been a lady all her life? There she was, quite ready to receive them, with a display of tea-things that might have warmed the heart of a china-shop; and little Jacob and the baby in such a state of perfection that their clothes looked as good as new, though Heaven knows they were old enough. Didn't she say before they had sat down five minutes that Barbara's mother was exactly the sort of lady she expected, and didn't Barbara's mother say that Kit's mother was the very picture of what *she* had expected, and didn't Kit's mother compliment Barbara's mother on Barbara, and didn't Barbara's mother compliment Kit's mother on Kit, and wasn't Barbara herself quite fascinated with little Jacob, and did ever a child show off when he was wanted, as that child did, or make such friends as he made?

"And we are both widows, too!" said Barbara's mother. "We must have been made to know each other."

"I haven't a doubt about it," returned Mrs. Nubbles. "And what a pity it is we didn't know each other sooner!"

"But then you know it's such a pleasure," said Barbara's mother, "to have it brought about by one's son and daughter, that it's fully made up for,—now an't it?"

To this, Kit's mother yielded her full assent, and tracing things back from effects to causes, they naturally reverted to their deceased husbands, respecting whose lives, deaths, and burials, they compared notes, and discovered sundry circumstances that tallied with wonderful exactness; such as Barbara's father having been exactly four years and ten months older than Kit's father, and one of them having died on a Wednesday and the other on a Thursday, and both of them having been of a very fine make and remarkably good-looking, with other extraordinary coincidences.—These recollections being of a kind calculated to cast a shadow on the brightness of the holiday, Kit diverted the conversation to general topics, and they were soon in great force again and as merry as before. Among other things, Kit told them about his old place, and the extraordinary beauty of Nell (of whom he had talked to Barbara a thousand times already); but the last-named circumstance failed to interest his hearers to anything like the extent he had supposed, and even his mother said (looking accidentally at Barbara at the same time), that there was no doubt Miss Nell was very pretty, but she was but a child after all, and there were many young women quite as pretty as she; and Barbara mildly observed that she should think so, and that she never could help believing Mr. Christopher must be under a mistake—which Kit wondered at very much, not being able to conceive what reason she had for doubting him. Barbara's mother, too, observed that it was very common for young folks to change at about fourteen or fifteen, and whereas they had been very pretty before, to grow up quite plain; which truth she illustrated by many forcible examples,—

especially one of a young man, who being a builder with great prospects had been particular in his attentions to Barbara, but whom Barbara would have nothing to say to, which (though everything happened for the best) she almost thought was a pity. Kit said he thought so too, and so he did honestly, and he wondered what made Barbara so silent all at once, and why his mother looked at him as if he shouldn't have said it.

However, it was high time now to be thinking of the play, for which great preparation was required in the way of shawls and bonnets, not to mention one handkerchief full of oranges and another of apples, which took some time tying up, in consequence of the fruit having a tendency to roll out at the corners. At length everything was ready, and they went off very fast; Kit's mother carrying the baby, who was dreadfully wide awake, and Kit holding little Jacob in one hand, and escorting Barbara with the other—a state of things which occasioned the two mothers, who walked behind, to declare that they looked quite family folks, and caused Barbara to blush, and say, "Now don't, mother." But Kit said she had no call to mind what they said; and indeed she need not have had, if she had known how very far from Kit's thoughts any love-making was. Poor Barbara!

At last they got to the theatre, which was Astley's; and in some two minutes after they had reached the yet unopened door, little Jacob was squeezed flat, and the baby had received divers concussions, and Barbara's mother's umbrella had been carried several yards off and passed back to her over the shoulders of the people, and Kit had hit a man on the head with the handkerchief of apples for "scrowdging" his parent with unnecessary violence, and there was a great uproar. But when they were once past the pay-place, and tearing away for very life with their checks in their hands; and above all, when they were fairly in the theatre, and seated in such places that they couldn't have had better if they had picked them out and taken them beforehand; all this was looked upon as quite a capital joke, and an essential part of the entertainment.

Dear, dear, what a place it looked, that Astley's! with all the paint, gilding, and looking-glass, the vague smell of horses, suggestive of coming wonders, the curtain that hid such gorgeous mysteries, the clean white sawdust down in the circus, the company coming in and taking their places, the fiddlers looking carelessly up at them while they tuned their instruments, as if they didn't want the play to begin, and knew it all beforehand! What a glow was that which burst upon them all, when that long, clear, brilliant row of lights came slowly up; and what the feverish excitement when the little bell rang and the music began in good earnest, with strong parts for the drums, and sweet effects for the triangles! Well might Barbara's mother say

to Kit's mother that the gallery was the place to see from, and wonder it wasn't much dearer than the boxes; and well might Barbara feel doubtful whether to laugh or cry, in her flutter of delight.

Then the play itself! the horses, which little Jacob believed from the first to be alive, and the ladies and gentlemen of whose reality he could be by no means persuaded, having never seen or heard anything at all like them—the firing, which made Barbara wink—the forlorn lady, who made her cry—the tyrant, who made her tremble—the man who sung the song with the lady's maid and danced the chorus, who made her laugh — the pony who reared up on his hind legs when he saw the murderer, and wouldn't hear of walking on all-fours again until he was taken into custody—the clown who ventured on such familiarities with the military man in boots—the lady who jumped over the nine-and-twenty ribbons and came down safe on the horse's back—everything was delightful, splendid, and surprising. Little Jacob applauded till his hands were sore; Kit cried "an-kor" at the end of everything, the three-act piece included; and Barbara's mother beat her umbrella on the floor, in her ecstacies, until it was nearly worn down to the gingham.

In the midst of all these fascinations, Barbara's thoughts seemed to have been still running upon what Kit had said at tea-time; for when they were coming out of the play, she asked him with an hysterical simper, if Miss Nell was as handsome as the lady who jumped over the ribbons.

"As handsome as *her?*" said Kit. "Double as handsome."

"Oh Christopher! I'm sure she was the beautifullest creature ever was," said Barbara.

"Nonsense!" returned Kit. "She was well enough, I don't deny that; but think how she was dressed and painted, and what a difference that made. Why *you* are a good deal better-looking than her, Barbara."

"Oh Christopher!" said Barbara, looking down.

"You are, any day," said Kit,—"and so's your mother."

Poor Barbara!

What was all this, though — even all this—to the extraordinary dissipation that ensued, when Kit, walking into an oyster-shop as bold as if he lived there, and not so much as looking at the counter or the man behind it, led his party into a box—a private box, fitted up with red curtains, white table-cloth, and cruet-stand complete—and ordered a fierce gentleman with whiskers, who acted as waiter and called him, him, Christopher Nubbles, "sir," to bring three dozen of his largest-sized oysters, and to look sharp about it. Yes, Kit told this gentleman to look sharp, and he not only said he would look sharp, but he actually did, and presently came running back with the newest loaves, and the freshest butter, and the largest oysters, ever seen. Then said Kit to this gentleman, "a pot of beer"—just so—and the gentleman, instead of replying, "Sir, do you address that language to me?" only said, "Pot o' beer, sir? yes, sir," and went off and fetched it, and put it on the table in a small decanter-stand, like those which blind-men' dogs carry about the streets in their mouths to catch the halfpence in; and both Kit's mother and Barbara's mother declared, as he turned away, that he was one of the slimmest and gracefullest young men she had ever looked upon.

Then they fell to work upon the supper in earnest; and there was Barbara, that foolish Barbara, declaring that she couldn't eat more than two, and wanting more pressing than you would believe before she would eat four; though her mother and Kit's mother made up for it pretty well, and ate and laughed and enjoyed themselves so thoroughly, that it did Kit good to see them, and made him laugh and eat likewise from strong sympathy. But the greatest miracle of the night was little Jacob, who ate oysters as if he had been born and bred to the business, sprinkled the pepper and the vinegar with a discretion beyond his years, and afterwards built a grotto on the table with the shells. There was the baby, too, who had never closed an eye all night, but had sat as good as gold, trying to force a large orange into his mouth, and gazing intently at the lights in the chandelier—there he was, sitting up in his mother's lap, staring at the gas withou winking, and making indentations in his soft visage with an oyster-shell, to that degree that a heart of iron must have loved him. In short, there never was a more successful supper; and when Kit ordered in a glass of something hot to finish with, and proposed Mr. and Mrs. Garland before sending it round, there were not six happier people in all the world.

But all happiness has an end—hence the chief pleasure of its next beginning—and as it was now growing late, they agreed it was time to turn their faces homewards. So, after going a little out of their way to see Barbara and Barbara's mother safe to a friend's house where they were to pass the night, Kit and his mother left them at the door, with an early appointment for returning to Finchley next morning, and a great many plans for next quarter's enjoyment. Then Kit took little Jacob on his back, and giving his arm to his mother, and a kiss to the baby, they all trudged home merrily together.

CHAPTER THE FORTIETH.

Full of that vague kind of penitence which holidays awaken next morning, Kit turned out at sunrise, and, with his faith in last night's enjoyments a little shaken by cool daylight and the return to every-day duties and occupations, went to meet Barbara and her mother at the appointed place. And being careful not to awaken any of the little household, who were yet resting from their unusual fatigues, Kit left his money on the chimney-piece; with an inscription in chalk, calling his mother's attention to the circumstance, and informing her that it came from her dutiful son; and went his way, with a heart something heavier than his pockets, but free from any very great oppression notwithstanding.

Oh, these holidays! why will they leave us some regret? why cannot we push them back only a week or two in our memories, so as to put them at once at that convenient distance whence they may be regarded either with a calm indifference or a pleasant effort of recollection! why will they hang about us like the flavour of yesterday's wine, suggestive of headaches and lassitude, and those good intentions for the future, which under the earth form the everlasting pavement of a large estate, and upon it usually endure until dinner-time or thereabouts!

Who will wonder that Barbara had a headache, or that Barbara's mother was disposed to be cross, or that she slightly underrated Astley's, and thought the clown was older than they had taken him to be last night! Kit was not surprised to hear her say so—not he. He had already had a misgiving that the inconstant actors in that dazzling vision had been doing the same thing the night before last, and would do it again that night, and the next, and for weeks and months to come, though he would not be there. Such is the difference between yesterday and to-day. We are all going to the play, or coming home from it.

However, the Sun himself is weak when he first rises, and gathers strength and courage as the day gets on. By degrees, they began to recall circumstances more and more pleasant in their nature, until, what between talking, walking, and laughing, they reached Finchley in such good heart, that Barbara's mother declared she never felt less tired or in better spirits, and so said Kit. Barbara had been silent all the way, but she said so too. Poor little Barbara! She was very quiet.

They were at home in such good time that Kit had rubbed down the pony and made him as spruce as a race-horse, before Mr. Garland came down to breakfast; which punctual and industrious conduct, the old lady, and the old gentleman, and Mr. Abel, highly extolled. At his usual hour (or rather at his usual minute and second, for he was the soul of punctuality), Mr. Abel walked out, to be overtaken by the London coach, and Kit and the old gentleman went to work in the garden.

This was not the least pleasant of Kit's employments, for on a fine day they were quite a family party; the old lady sitting hard by with her work-basket on a little table; the old gentleman digging, or pruning, or clipping about with a large pair of shears, or helping Kit in some way or other with great assiduity; and Whisker looking on from his paddock in placid contemplation of them all. To-day they were to trim the grape-vine; so Kit mounted half-way up a short ladder, and began to snip and hammer away, while the old gentleman, with a great interest in his proceedings, handed up the nails and shreds of cloth as he wanted them. The old lady and Whisker looked on as usual.

"Well, Christopher," said Mr. Garland, "and so you have made a new friend, eh!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," returned Kit, looking down from the ladder.

"You have made a new friend, I hear from Mr. Abel," said the old gentleman, "at the office!"

"Oh—yes sir, yes. He behaved very handsome, sir."

"I'm glad to hear it," returned the old gentleman, with a smile. "He is disposed to behave more handsomely still, though, Christopher."

"Indeed, sir! It's very kind in him, but I don't want him to, I'm sure," said Kit, hammering stoutly at an obdurate nail.

"He is rather anxious," pursued the old gentleman, "to have you in his own service—take care what you're doing, or you will fall down and hurt yourself."

"To have me in his service, sir!" cried Kit, who had stopped short in his work and faced about upon the ladder like some dexterous tumbler. "Why, sir, I don't think he can be in earnest when he says that."

"Oh! but he is, indeed," said Mr. Garland. "And he has told Mr. Abel so."

"I never heard of such a thing!" muttered Kit, looking ruefully at his master and mistress. "I wonder at him; that I do."

"You see, Christopher," said Mr. Garland, "this is a point of much importance

to you, and you should understand and consider it in that light. This gentleman is able to give you more money than I — not, I hope, to carry through the various relations of master and servant, more kindness and confidence; but certainly, Christopher, to give you more money."

"Well," said Kit, "after that, sir,—"

"Wait a moment," interposed Mr. Garland. "That is not all. You were a very faithful servant to your old employers, as I understand, and should this gentleman recover them, as it is his purpose to attempt doing by every means in his power, I have no doubt that you, being in his service, would meet with your reward. Besides," added the old gentleman, with stronger emphasis, "besides having the pleasure of being again brought into communication with those to whom you seem to be so very strongly and disinterestedly attached. You must think of all this, Christopher, and not be rash or hasty in your choice."

Kit did suffer one twinge, one momentary pang in keeping the resolution he had already formed, when this last argument passed swiftly into his thoughts, and conjured up the realisation of all his hopes and fancies. But it was gone in a minute, and he sturdily rejoined that the gentleman must look out for somebody else, as he did think he might have done at first.

"He has no right to think that I'd be led away to go to him, sir," said Kit, turning round again, after half a minute's hammering. "Does he think I'm a fool?"

"He may, perhaps, Christopher, if you refuse his offer," said Mr. Garland, gravely.

"Then let him, sir," retorted Kit, "what do I care, sir, what he thinks? why should I care for his thinking, sir, when I know that I should be a fool, and worse than a fool, sir, to leave the kindest master and mistress that ever was or can be, who took me out of the streets a very poor and hungry lad indeed — poorer and hungrier perhaps than ever you think for, sir—to go to him or anybody? If Miss Nell was to come back, ma'am," added Kit, turning suddenly to his mistress, "why that would be another thing, and perhaps if *she* wanted me, I might ask you now and then to let me work for her when all was done at home. But when she comes back, I see

now that she'll be rich, as old master always said she would, and being a rich young lady, what could she want of me! No, no," added Kit, shaking his head sorrowfully, "she'll never want me any more, and, bless her, I hope she never may, though I *should* like to see her, too!"

Here Kit drove a nail into the wall, very hard—much harder than was necessary—and having done so, faced about again.

"There's the pony, sir," said Kit—"Whisker, ma'am (and he knows so well I'm talking about him that he begins to neigh directly, sir),—would he let anybody come near him but me, ma'am? Here's the garden, sir, and Mr. Abel, ma'am. Would Mr. Abel part with me, sir, or is there anybody that could be fonder of the garden, ma'am? It would break mother's heart, sir, and even little Jacob would have sense enough to cry his eyes out, ma'am, if he thought that Mr. Abel could wish to part with me so soon, after having told me only the other day, that he hoped we might be together for years to come—"

There is no telling how long Kit might have stood upon the ladder, addressing his master and mistress by turns, and generally turning towards the wrong person, if Barbara had not at that moment come running up to say that a messenger from the office had brought a note, which, with an expression of some surprise at Kit's oratorical appearance, she put into her master's hand.

"Oh!" said the old gentleman, after reading it, "ask the messenger to walk this way." Barbara tripping off to do as she was bid, he turned to Kit and said that they would not pursue the subject any further, and that Kit could not be more unwilling to part with them, than they would be to part with Kit; a sentiment which the old lady very generously echoed.

"At the same time, Christopher," added Mr. Garland, glancing at the note in his hand, "if the gentleman should want to borrow you now and then for an hour or so, or even a day or so, at a time, we must consent to lend you, and you must consent to be lent.—Oh! here is the young gentleman. How do you do, sir?"

This salutation was addressed to Mr. Chuckster, who, with his hat extremely on one side, and his hair a long way beyond it, came swaggering up the walk.

"Hope I see you well, sir," returned that gentleman. "Hope I see *you* well, ma'am. Charming box this, sir. Delicious country, to be sure."

"You want to take Kit back with you, I find!" observed Mr. Garland.

"I've got a cab waiting on purpose," replied the clerk. "A very spanking grey in that cab, sir, if you're a judge of horseflesh."

Declining to inspect the spanking grey on the plea that he was but poorly acquainted with such matters, and would but imperfectly appreciate his beauties, Mr. Garland invited Mr. Chuckster to partake of a slight repast in the way of lunch, and that gentleman readily consenting, certain cold viands, flanked with ale and wine, were speedily prepared for his refreshment.

At this repast, Mr. Chuckster exerted his utmost abilities to enchant his entertainers, and impress them with a conviction of the mental superiority of those who dwelt in town; with which view, he led the discourse to the small scandal of the day, in which he was justly considered by his friends to shine prodigiously. Thus, he was in a condition to relate the exact circumstances of the difference between the Marquis of Mizzler and Lord Bobby, which it appeared originated in a disputed bottle of champagne, and not in a pigeon-pie, as erroneously reported in the newspapers; neither had Lord Bobby said to the Marquis of Mizzler, "Mizzler, one of us two tells a lie, and I'm not the man," as incorrectly stated by the same authorities; but, "Mizzler, you know where I'm to be found, and damme, sir, find me, if you want me,"—which, of course, entirely changed the aspect of this interesting question, and placed it in a very different light. He also acquainted them with the precise amount of the income guarantied by the Duke of Thigsberry to Violetta Stetta of the Italian Opera, which, it appeared, was payable quarterly, and not half-yearly, as the public had been given to understand, and which was *ex*clusive, and not *in*clusive, (as had been monstrously stated,) of jewellery, perfumery, hair-powder for five footmen, and two daily changes of kid-gloves for a page. Having entreated the old lady and gentleman to set their minds at rest upon these absorbing points, for they might rely on his statement being the correct one, Mr. Chuckster entertained them with theatrical chitchat and the court circular, and so wound up a brilliant and fascinating conversation which he had maintained alone, and without any assistance whatever, for upwards of three-quarters of an hour.

"And now that the nag has got his wind again," said Mr. Chuckster, rising in a graceful manner, "I'm afraid I must cut my stick."

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Garland offered any opposition to his tearing himself away, (feeling, no doubt, that such a man could ill be spared from his proper sphere of action,) and, therefore, Mr. Chuckster and

Kit were shortly afterwards upon their way to town; Kit being perched upon the box of the cabriolet beside the driver, and Mr. Chuckster seated in solitary state inside, with one of his boots sticking out at each of the front windows.

When they reached the Notary's house, Kit followed into the office, and was desired by Mr. Abel to sit down and wait, for the gentleman who wanted him had gone out, and perhaps might not return for some time. This anticipation was strictly verified, for Kit had had his dinner, and his tea, and had read all the lighter matter in the Law-List, and the Post-Office Directory, and had fallen asleep a great many times, before the gentleman whom he had seen before, came in; which he did at last in a very great hurry.

He was closeted with Mr. Witherden for some little time, and Mr. Abel had been called in to assist at the conference, before Kit, wondering very much what he was wanted for, was summoned to attend them.

"Christopher," said the gentleman, turning to him directly he entered the room, "I have found your old master and young mistress."

"No, sir! Have you, though?" returned Kit, his eyes sparkling with delight. "Where are they, sir? How are they, sir? Are they—are they near here?"

"A long way from here," returned the gentleman, shaking his head. "But I am going away to-night to bring them back, and I want you to go with me."

"Me, sir?" cried Kit, full of joy and surprise.

"The place," said the strange gentleman, turning thoughtfully to the Notary, "indicated by this man of the dogs, is—how far from here—sixty miles?"

"From sixty to seventy."

"Humph! If we travel post all night, we shall reach there in good time to-morrow morning. Now, the only question is, as they will not know me, and the child, God bless her, would think that any stranger pursuing them had a design upon her grandfather's liberty,—can I do better than take this lad, whom they both know and will readily remember, as an assurance to them of my friendly intentions?"

"Certainly not," replied the Notary. "Take Christopher by all means."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kit, who had listened to this discourse with a lengthening countenance, "but if that's the reason, I'm afraid I should do more harm than good—Miss Nell, sir, *she* knows me, and would trust in me, I am sure; but old master—I don't know why, gentlemen; nobody does—would not bear me in his sight after he had been ill, and Miss Nell herself told me that I must not go near him or let him see me any more. I should spoil all that you were doing if I went, I'm afraid. I'd give the world to go, but you had better not take me, sir."

"Another difficulty!" cried the impetuous gentleman. "Was ever man so beset as I? Is there nobody else that knew them, nobody else in whom they had any confidence? Solitary as their lives were, is there no one person who would serve my purpose?"

"*Is* there, Christopher?" said the Notary.

"Not one, sir," replied Kit. — "Yes, though,—there's my mother."

"Did they know her?" said the single gentleman.

"Know her, sir! why, she was always coming backwards and forwards. They were as kind to her as they were to me. Bless you, sir, she expected they'd come back to her house."

"Then where the devil is the woman?" said the impatient gentleman, catching up his hat. "Why isn't she here? Why is that woman always out of the way when she is most wanted?"

In a word, the single gentleman was bursting out of the office, bent upon laying violent hands on Kit's mother, forcing her into a post-chaise, and carrying her off, when this novel kind of abduction was with some difficulty prevented by the joint efforts of Mr. Abel and the Notary, who restrained him by dint of their remonstrances, and persuaded him to sound Kit upon the probability of her being able and willing to undertake such a journey on so short a notice.

This occasioned some doubts on the part of Kit, and some violent demonstrations on that of the single gentleman, and a great many soothing speeches on that of the Notary and Mr. Abel. The upshot of the business was, that Kit, after weighing the matter in his mind and considering it carefully, promised, on behalf of his mother, that she should be ready within two hours from that time to undertake the expedition, and engaged to produce her in that place, in all respects equipped and prepared for the journey, before the specified period had expired.

Having given this pledge, which was rather a bold one, and not particularly easy of redemption, Kit lost no time in sallying forth and taking measures for its immediate fulfilment.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-FIRST.

Kit made his way through the crowded streets, dividing the stream of people, dashing across the busy roadways, diving into lanes and alleys, and stopping or turning aside for nothing, until he came in front of the Old Curiosity Shop, when he came to a stand; partly from habit and partly from being out of breath.

It was a gloomy autumn evening, and he thought the old place had never looked so dismal as in its dreary twilight. The windows broken, the rusty sashes rattling in their frames, the deserted house a dull barrier dividing the glaring lights and bustle of the street into two long lines, and standing in the midst, cold, dark, and empty,—presented a cheerless spectacle which mingled harshly with the bright prospects the boy had been building up for its late inmates, and came like a disappointment or misfortune. Kit would have had a good fire roaring up the empty chimneys, lights sparkling and shining through the windows, people moving briskly to and fro, voices in cheerful conversation, something in unison with the new hopes that were astir. He had not expected that the house would wear any different aspect — had known indeed that it could not; but coming upon it in the midst of eager thoughts and expectations, it checked the current in its flow, and darkened it with a mournful shadow.

Kit, however, fortunately for himself, was not learned enough or contemplative enough to be troubled with presages of evil afar off; and having no mental spectacles to assist his vision in this respect, saw nothing but the dull house, which jarred uncomfortably upon his previous thoughts. So, almost wishing that he had not passed it, though hardly knowing why, he hurried on again, making up, by his increased speed, for the few moments he had lost.

"Now, if she should be out," thought Kit, as he approached the poor dwelling of his mother, "and I not able to find her, "this impatient gentleman would be in a -etty taking. And sure enough there's no light, and the door's fast. Now, God forgive me for saying so, but if this is Little Bethel's doing, I wish Little Bethel was—was farther off," said Kit, checking himself, and knocking at the door.

A second knock brought no reply from within the house; but caused a woman over the way to look out and inquire who that was, wanting Mrs. Nubbles.

"Me," said Kit "She's at—at Little Bethel, I suppose?"—getting out the name of the obnoxious conventicle with some reluctance, and laying a spiteful emphasis upon the words.

The neighbour nodded assent.

"Then pray tell me where it is," said Kit, "for I have come on a pressing matter, and must fetch her out, even if she was in the pulpit."

It was not very easy to procure a direction to the fold in question, as none of the neighbours were of the flock that resorted thither, and few knew anything more of it than the name. At last, a gossip of Mrs. Nubbles's, who had accompanied her to chapel on one or two occasions when a comfortable cup of tea had preceded her devotions, furnished the needful information, which Kit had no sooner obtained than he started off again.

Little Bethel might have been nearer, and might have been in a straighter road; though in that case the reverend gentleman who presided over its congregation would have lost his favourite allusion to the crooked ways by which it was approached, and which enabled him to liken it to Paradise itself, in contradistinction to the parish church and the broad thoroughfare leading thereunto. Kit found it at last, after some trouble, and pausing at the door to take breath that he might enter with becoming decency, passed into the chapel.

It was not badly named in one respect, being in truth a particularly little Bethel—a Bethel of the smallest dimensions—with a small number of small pews, and a small pulpit, in which a small gentleman (by trade a Shoemaker, and by calling a Divine) was delivering in a by no means small voice, a by no means small sermon, judging of its dimensions by the condition of his audience, which, if their gross amount were but small, comprised a still smaller number of hearers, as the majority were slumbering.

Among these was Kit's mother, who, finding it matter of extreme difficulty to keep her eyes open after the fatigues of last night, and feeling their inclination to close strongly backed and seconded by the arguments of the preacher, had yielded to the drowsiness that overpowered her, and fallen asleep; though not so soundly but that she could from time to time utter a slight and almost inaudible groan, as if in recognition of the orator's doctrines. The baby in her arms was as fast asleep as she and little Jacob, whose youth prevented him from recognizing in this prolonged

spiritual nourishment anything half as interesting as oysters, was alternately very fast asleep and very wide awake, as his inclination to slumber or his terror of being personally alluded to in the discourse, gained the mastery over him.

"And now I'm here," thought Kit, gliding into the nearest empty pew which was opposite his mother's, and on the other side of the little aisle, "how am I ever to get at her or persuade her to come out! I might as well be twenty miles off. She'll never wake till it's all over, and there goes the clock again! If he would but leave off for a minute, or if they'd only sing!"—

But there was little encouragement to believe that either event would happen for a couple of hours to come. The preacher went on telling them what he meant to convince them of before he had done, and it was clear that if he only kept to one-half of his promises and forgot the other, he was good for that time at least.

In his desperation and restlessness, Kit cast his eyes about the chapel, and happening to let them fall upon a little seat in front of the clerk's desk, could scarcely believe them when they showed him—Quilp!

He rubbed them twice or thrice, but still they insisted that Quilp was there, and there indeed he was, sitting with his hands upon his knees, and his hat between them on a little wooden bracket, with the accustomed grin upon his dirty face, and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. He certainly did not glance at Kit or at his mother, and appeared utterly unconscious of their presence; still Kit could not help feeling directly that the attention of the sly little fiend was fastened upon them, and upon nothing else.

But astounded as he was by the apparition of the dwarf among the Little Bethelites, and not free from a misgiving that it was the forerunner of some trouble or annoyance, he was compelled to subdue his wonder and take active measures for the withdrawal of his parent, as the evening was now creeping on, and the matter grew serious. Therefore, the next time little Jacob awoke, Kit set himself to attract his wandering attention, and this not being a very difficult task (one sneeze effected it), he signed to him to rouse his mother.

Ill-luck would have it, however, that just then the preacher in a forcible exposition of one head of his discourse, leaned over the pulpit-desk so that very little more of him than his legs remained inside; and, while he made vehement gestures with his right hand, and held on with his left, stared, or seemed to stare, straight into little Jacob's eyes, threatening him by his strained look and attitude—so it appeared to the child—that if he so much as moved a muscle, he, the preacher, would be literally, and not figuratively "down upon him" that instant. In this fearful state of things, distracted by the sudden appearance of Kit, and fascinated by the eyes of the preacher, the miserable Jacob sat bolt upright, wholly incapable of motion, strongly disposed to cry, but afraid to do so, and returning his pastor's gaze until his infant eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

"If I must do it openly, I must," thought Kit. With that, he walked softly out of his pew and into his mother's, and, as Mr. Swiveller would have observed if he had been present, "collared" the baby without speaking a word.

"Hush, mother!" whispered Kit. "Come along with me, I've got something to tell you."

"Where am I?" said Mrs. Nubbles.

"In this blessed Little Bethel," returned her son, peevishly.

"Blessed, indeed!" cried Mrs. Nubbles, catching at the word. "Oh, Christopher, how have I been edified this night!"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Kit, hastily; "but come along, mother, everybody's looking at us. Don't make a noise—bring Jacob—that's right."

"Stay, Satan, stay!" cried the preacher, as Kit was moving off.

"The gentleman says you're to stay Christopher," whispered his mother.

"Stay, Satan, stay!" roared the preacher again. "Tempt not the woman that doth incline her ear to thee, but hearken to the voice of him that calleth. He hath a lamb from the fold!" cried the preacher, raising his voice still higher and pointing to the baby. "He beareth off a lamb, a precious lamb! He goeth about like a wolf in the night season, and inveigleth the tender lambs!"

Kit was the best-tempered fellow in the world, but considering this strong language, and being somewhat excited by the circumstances in which he was placed, he faced round to the pulpit with the baby in his arms, and replied aloud,

"No, I don't. He's my brother."

"He's *my* brother!" cried the preacher.

"He isn't," said Kit, indignantly.—"How can you say such a thing?—and don't call me names, if you please; what harm have I done? I shouldn't have come to take 'em away unless I was obliged, you may depend upon that; and I wanted to do it very quiet, but you wouldn't let me.—Now, you have the goodness to abuse Satan and them as much as you like, sir, and let me alone, if you please."

So saying, Kit marched out of the chapel

followed by his mother and little Jacob, and found himself in the open air, with an indistinct recollection of having seen the people wake up and look surprised, and of Quilp having remained throughout the interruption in his old attitude, without moving his eyes from the ceiling, or appearing to take the smallest notice of anything that passed.

"Oh, Kit!" said his mother, with her handkerchief to her eyes, "what have you done! I never can go there again,—never!"

"I'm glad of it, mother. What was there in the little bit of pleasure you took last night that made it necessary for you to be low-spirited and sorrowful to-night?—That's the way you do. If you're happy or merry ever, you come here to say along with that chap, that you're sorry for it. More shame for you, mother, I was going to say."

"Hush, dear!" said Mrs. Nubbles,—"you don't mean what you say, I know, but you're talking sinfulness."

"Don't mean it? But I do mean it," retorted Kit. "I don't believe, mother, that harmless cheerfulness and good-humour are thought greater sins in Heaven than shirt-collars are, and that those chaps are just about as right and sensible in putting down the one as in leaving off the other—that's my belief. But I won't say anything more about it, if you'll promise not to cry, that's all; and you take the baby that's a lighter weight, and give me little Jacob; and as we go along (which we must do pretty quick) I'll tell you the news I bring which will surprise you a little, I can tell you. There—that's right. Now you look as if you'd never seen Little Bethel in all your life, as I hope you never will again; and here's the baby; and little Jacob, you get a'top of my back and catch hold of me tight round the neck, and whenever a Little Bethel parson calls you a precious lamb, or says your brother's one, you tell him it's the truest thing he's said for a twelvemonth, and that if he'd got a little more of the lamb himself, and less of the mint-sauce—not being quite so sharp and sour over it—I should like him all the better. That's what you've got to say to *him*, Jacob."

Talking on in this way, half in jest and half in earnest, and cheering up his mother, the children, and himself, by the one simple process of determining to be in good humour, Kit led them briskly forward; and on the road home related what had passed at the Notary's house, and the purpose with which he had intruded on the solemnities of Little Bethel.

His mother was not a little startled on learning what service was required of her, and presently fell into a confusion of ideas, of which the most prominent were that it was a great honour and dignity to ride in a post-chaise, and that it was a moral impossibility to leave the children behind. But this objection and a great many others, founded upon certain articles of dress being at the wash, and certain other articles having no existence in the wardrobe of Mrs. Nubbles, were overcome by Kit, who opposed to each and every of them, the pleasure of recovering Nell, and the delight it would be to bring her back in triumph.

"There's only ten minutes, now, mother,"—said Kit, when they reached home. "There's a bandbox. Throw in what you want, and we'll be off directly."

To tell how Kit then hustled into the box all sorts of things which could by no remote contingency be wanted, and how he left out everything likely to be of the smallest use; how a neighbour was persuaded to come and stop with the children, and how the children at first cried dismally, and then laughed heartily on being promised all kinds of impossible and unheard-of toys; how Kit's mother wouldn't leave off kissing them, and how Kit couldn't make up his mind to be vexed with her for doing it; would take more time and room than we can spare. So, passing over all such matters, it is sufficient to say that within a few minutes after the two hours had expired, Kit and his mother arrived at the Notary's door, where a post-chaise was already waiting.

"With four horses, I declare!" said Kit, quite aghast at the preparations. "Well, you *are* going to do it, mother! Here she is, sir. Here's my mother. She's quite ready, sir."

"That's well," returned the gentleman. "Now, don't be in a flutter, ma'am; you'll be taken great care of. Where's the box with the new clothing and necessaries for them?"

"Here it is!" said the Notary. In with it, Christopher."

"All right, sir," replied Kit. "Quite ready now, sir."

"Then come along," said the single gentleman. And thereupon he gave his arm to Kit's mother, handed her into the carriage as politely as you please, and took his seat beside her.

Up went the steps, bang went the door, round whirled the wheels, and off they rattled, with Kit's mother hanging out at one window waving a damp pocket-handkerchief, and screaming out a great many

messages to little Jacob and the baby, of which nobody heard a word.

Kit stood in the middle of the road, and looked after them with tears in his eyes—not brought there by the departure he witnessed, but by the return to which he looked forward. "They went away," he thought, "on foot, with nobody to speak to them or say a kind word at parting, and they'll come back drawn by four horses, with this rich gentleman for their friend, and all their troubles over! She'll forget that she has taught me to write—"

Whatever Kit thought about after this, took some time to think of, for he stood gazing up the lines of shining lamps, long after the chaise had disappeared, and did not return into the house until the Notary and Mr. Abel, who had themselves lingered outside till the sound of the wheels was no longer distinguishable, had several times wondered what could possibly detain him.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-SECOND.

It behoves us to leave Kit, for a while, thoughtful and expectant, and to follow the fortunes of little Nell; resuming the thread of the narrative at the point where it was left some chapters back.

In one of those wanderings in the evening time, when, following the two sisters at a humble distance, she felt, in her sympathy with them and her recognition in their trials of something akin to her own loneliness of spirit, a comfort and consolation which made such moments a time of deep delight, though the softened pleasure they yielded was of that kind which lives and dies in tears;—in one of those wanderings at the quiet hour of twilight, when sky, and earth, and air, and rippling water, and sound of distant bells, claimed kindred with the emotions of the solitary child, and inspired her with soothing thoughts, but not of a child's world or its easy joys—in one of those rambles which had now become her only pleasure or relief from care, light had faded into darkness and evening deepened into night, and still the young creature lingered in the gloom; feeling a companionship in Nature so serene and still, when noise of tongues and glare of garish lights would have been solitude indeed.

The sisters had gone home, and she was alone. She raised her eyes to the bright stars, looking down so mildly from the wide worlds of air, and gazing on them, found new stars burst upon her view, and more beyond, and more beyond again, until the whole great expanse sparkled with shining spheres, rising higher and higher in immeasurable space, eternal in their numbers as in their changeless and incorruptible existence. She bent over the calm river, and saw them shining in the same majestic order as when the dove beheld them gleaming through the swollen waters, upon the mountain tops down far below, and dead mankind, a million fathoms deep.

The child sat silently beneath a tree, hushed in her very breath by the stillness of the night, and all its attendant wonders. The time and place awoke reflection, and she thought with a quiet hope—less hope, perhaps, than resignation—on the past, and present, and what was yet before her. Between the old man and herself there had come a gradual separation, harder to bear than any former sorrow. Every evening, and often in the day-time, too, he was absent, alone; and although she well knew where he went, and why—too well from the constant drain upon her scanty purse, and from his haggard looks—he evaded all inquiry, maintained a strict reserve, and even shunned her presence.

She sat meditating sorrowfully upon this change, and mingling it, as it were, with everything about her, when the distant church-clock bell struck nine. Rising at the sound, she retraced her steps, and turned thoughtfully towards the town.

She had gained a little wooden bridge, which, thrown across the stream, led into a meadow in her way, when she came suddenly upon a ruddy light, and looking forward more attentively, discerned that it proceeded from what appeared to be an encampment of gipsies, who had made a fire in one corner at no great distance from the path, and were sitting or lying round it. As she was too poor to have any fear of them, she did not alter her course, (which, indeed, she could not have done without going a long way round,) but quickened her pace a little, and kept straight on.

A movement of timid curiosity impelled her, when she approached the spot, to glance towards the fire. There was a form between it and her, the outline strongly developed against the light, which caused her to stop abruptly. Then, as if she had reasoned with herself, and were assured that it could not be, or had satisfied herself that it was not, that of the person she had supposed, she went on again.

But at that instant the conversation, whatever it was, which had been carrying on near this fire, was resumed, and the tones of the voice that spoke—she could not distinguish words—sounded as familiar to her as her own.

She turned, and looked back. The person had been seated before, but was now in a standing posture, and leaning forward upon a stick on which he rested both hands. The attitude was no less familiar to her than the tone of voice had been. It *was* her grandfather.

Her first impulse was to call to him; her next to wonder who his associates could be, and for what purpose they were together. Some vague apprehension succeeded, and, yielding to the strong inclination it awakened, she drew nearer to the place; not advancing across the open field, however, but creeping towards it by the hedge.

In this way she advanced within a few feet of the fire, and standing among a few young trees, could both see and hear, without much danger of being observed.

There were no women or children, as she had seen in other gipsy camps they had passed in their wayfaring, and but one gipsy—a tall athletic man, who stood with his arms folded, leaning against a tree at a little distance off, looking now at the fire, and now, under his black eyelashes, at three other men who were there, with a watchful but half-concealed interest in their conversation. Of these her grandfather was one; and the others she recognised as the first card-players at the public house, on the eventful night of the storm — the man whom they had called Isaac List, and his gruff companion. One of the low, arched gipsy-tents, common to that people, was pitched hard by, but it either was, or appeared to be, empty.

"Well, are you going?" said the stout man, looking up from the ground where he was lying at his ease, into her grandfather's face. "You were in a mighty hurry a minute ago. Go, if you like. You're your own master, I hope?"

"Don't vex him," returned Isaac List, who was squatting like a frog on the other side of the fire, and had so screwed himself up, that he seemed to be squinting all over; "he didn't mean any offence."

"You keep me poor, and plunder me, and make a sport and jest of me besides," said the old man, turning from one to the other. "Ye'll drive me mad among ye."

The utter irresolution and feebleness of the grey-haired man, contrasted with the keen and cunning looks of those in whose hands he was, smote upon the little listener's heart. But she constrained herself to attend to all that passed, and to note each look and word.

"Confound you, what do you mean?" said the stout man, rising a little, and supporting himself upon his elbow. "Keep you poor! You'd keep us poor, if you could, wouldn't you? That's the way with you whining, puny, pitiful players. When you lose, you're martyrs; but I don't find that when you win, you look upon the other losers in that light. As to plunder!" cried the fellow raising his voice — "Damme, what do you mean by such ungentlemanly language as plunder, eh?"

The speaker laid himself down again at full length, and gave one or two short, angry kicks, as if in further expression of his unbounded indignation. It was quite plain that he acted the bully, and his friend the peace-maker, for some particular purpose, or rather it would have been to any one but

the weak old man; for they exchanged glances quite openly, both with each other and with the gipsy, who grinned his approval of the jest until his white teeth shone again.

The old man stood helplessly among them for a little time, and then said, turning to his assailant:

"You yourself were speaking of plunder just now, you know. Don't be so violent with me. You were, were you not?"

"Not of plundering among present company! Honour among—among gentlemen, sir," returned the other, who seemed to have been very near giving an awkward termination to the sentence.

"Don't be hard upon him, Jowl," said Isaac List. "He's very sorry for giving offence. There — go on with what you were saying—go on."

"I'm a jolly old tender-hearted lamb, I am," cried Mr. Jowl, "to be sitting here, at my time of life, giving advice, when I know it won't be taken, and that I shall get nothing but abuse for my pains. But that's the way I've gone through life. Experience has never put a chill upon my warm-heartedness."

"I tell you he's very sorry, don't I?" remonstrated Isaac List, "and that he wishes you'd go on."

"*Does* he wish it?" said the other.

"Ay," groaned the old man, sitting down, and rocking himself to and fro. "Go on, go on. It's in vain to fight with it;—I can't do it;—go on."

"I go on, then," said Jowl, "where I left off, when you got up so quick. If you're persuaded that it's time for luck to turn, as it certainly is, and find you haven't got means enough to try it, (and that's where it is, for you know yourself that you never have the funds to keep on long enough at a sitting,) help yourself to what seems put in your way on purpose. Borrow it, I say;—and, when you're able, pay it back again."

"Certainly," Isaac List struck in, "if this good lady as keeps the wax-works has money, and does keep it in a tin box when she goes to bed, and doesn't lock her door for fear of fire, it seems a easy thing;—quite a Providence, *I* should call it, but then I've been religiously brought up."

"You see, Isaac," said his friend, growing more eager, and drawing himself closer to the old man, while he signed to the gipsy not to come between them; "you see, Isaac, strangers are going in and out every hour of the day; nothing would be more likely than for one of these strangers to get under the good old lady's bed, or lock himself in the cupboard; suspicion would be very wide, and would fall a long way from the mark, no doubt. I'd give him his revenge to the last farthing he brought, whatever the amount was."

"But could you?" urged Isaac List. "Is your bank strong enough?"

"Strong enough!" answered the other, with assumed disdain. "Here, you sir, give me that box out of the straw."

This was addressed to the gipsy, who crawled into the low tent on all fours, and after some rummaging and rustling returned with a cash box, which the man who had spoken opened with a key he wore about his person.

"Do you see this?" he said, gathering up the money in his hand and letting it drop back into the box, between his fingers, like water. "Do you hear it! Do you know the sound of gold? There, put it back — and don't talk about banks again, Isaac, till you've got one of your own."

Isaac List, with great apparent humility, protested that he had never doubted the credit of a gentleman so notorious for his honourable dealing as Mr. Jowl, and that he had hinted at the production of the box, not for the satisfaction of his doubts, for he could have none, but with a view to being regaled with a sight of so much wealth, which, though it might be deemed by some but an unsubstantial and visionary pleasure, was to one in his circumstances a source of extreme delight, only to be surpassed by its safe depository in his own personal pockets. Although Mr. List and Mr. Jowl addressed themselves to each other, it was remarkable that they both looked narrowly at the old man, who, with his eyes fixed upon the fire, sat brooding over it, yet listening eagerly — as it seemed from a certain involuntary motion of the head, or twitching of the face from time to time — to all they said.

"My advice," said Jowl, lying down again, with a careless air, "is plain—I have given it, in fact. I act as a friend. Why should I help a man to the means, perhaps, of winning all I have, unless I considered him my friend? It's foolish, I dare say, to be so thoughtful of the welfare of other people, but that's my constitution, and I can't help it; so don't blame me, Isaac List."

"*I* blame you!" returned the person addressed; "not for the world, Mr. Jowl. I wish I could afford to be as liberal as you; and, as you say, he might pay it back if he won, and if he lost——"

"You're not to take that into consideration at all," said Jowl. "But suppose he did, (and nothing's less likely from all I know of chances,) why, it's better to lose other people's money than one's own, I hope?"

"Ah!" cried Isaac List, rapturously, "the pleasures of winning! The delight of picking up the money—the bright, shining yellow boys—and sweeping 'em into one's pocket! The deliciousness of having a triumph at last, and thinking that one didn't stop short and turn back, but went half-way to meet it! The——but you're not going, old gentleman?"

"I'll do it," said the old man, who had risen and taken two or three hurried steps away, and now returned as hurriedly. "I'll have it, every penny."

"Why, that's brave," cried Isaac, jumping up and slapping him on the shoulder; "and I respect you for having so much young blood left. Ha, ha, ha! Joe Jowl's half sorry he advised you now. We've got the laugh against him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He gives me my revenge, mind," said the old man, pointing to him eagerly, with his shrivelled hand; "mind—he stakes coin against coin, down to the last one in the box, be there many or few. Remember that!"

"I'm witness," returned Isaac. "I'll see fair between you."

"I have passed my word," said Jowl, with feigned reluctance, "and I'll keep it. When does this match come off? I wish it was over.—To-night?"

"I must have the money first," said the old man; "and that I'll have to-morrow."

"Why not to-night?" urged Jowl.

"It's late now, and I should be flushed and flurried," said the old man. "It must be softly done. No, to-morrow night."

"Then to-morrow be it," said Jowl. "A drop of comfort here. Luck to the best man! Fill!"

The gipsy produced three tin cups, and filled them to the brim with brandy. The old man turned aside and muttered to himself before he drank. Her own name struck upon the listener's ear, coupled with some wish so fervent, that he seemed to breathe it in an agony of supplication.

"God be merciful to us!" cried the child within herself, "and help us in this trying hour! What shall I do to save him?"

The remainder of their conversation was carried on in a lower tone of voice, and was sufficiently concise; relating merely to the execution of the project, and the best precautions for diverting suspicion. The old man then shook hands with his tempters, and withdrew.

They watched his bowed and stooping figure as it retreated slowly, and when he turned his head to look back, which he often did, waved their hands, or shouted some brief encouragement. It was not until they had seen him gradually diminish into a mere speck upon the distant road, that they turned to each other, and ventured to laugh aloud.

"So," said Jowl, warming his hands at the fire, "it's done at last. He wanted more persuading than I expected. It's three weeks ago since we first put this into his head. What'll he bring, do you think?"

"Whatever he brings, it's halved between us," returned Isaac List.

The other man nodded. "We must make quick work of it," he said, "and then cut his acquaintance, or we may be suspected. Sharp's the word."

List and the gipsy acquiesced. When they had all three amused themselves a little with their victim's infatuation, they dismissed the subject as one which had been sufficiently discussed, and began to talk in a jargon which the child did not understand. As their discourse appeared to relate to matters in which they were warmly interested, however, she deemed it the best time for escaping unobserved; and crept away with slow and cautious steps, keeping in the shadow of the hedges, or forcing a path through them or the dry ditches, until she could emerge upon the road at a point beyond their range of vision. Then she fled homewards as quickly as she could, torn and bleeding from the wounds of thorns and briers, but more lacerated in mind, and threw herself upon her bed, distracted.

The first idea that flashed upon her mind was flight, instant flight; dragging him from that place, and rather dying of want upon the roadside, than ever exposing him again to such terrible temptations. Then she remembered that the crime was not to be committed until next night, and there was the immediate time for thinking, and resolving what to do. Then she was distracted with a horrible fear that he might be committing it at that moment; with a dread of hearing shrieks and cries piercing the silence of the night; with fearful thoughts of what he might be tempted and led on to do, if he were detected in the act, and had but a woman to struggle with. It was impossible to bear such torture. She stole to the room where the money was, opened the door and looked in. God be praised! He was not there, and she was sleeping soundly.

She went back to her own room, and tried to prepare herself for bed. But who could sleep—sleep! who could lie passively down, distracted by such terrors! They came upon her more and more strongly yet. Half undressed, and with her hair in wild disorder, she flew to the old man's bedside, clasped him by the wrist, and roused him from his sleep.

"What's this!" he cried, starting up

in bed, and fixing his eyes upon her spectral face.

"I have had a dreadful dream," said the child, with an energy that nothing but such terrors could have inspired. "A dreadful, horrible dream. I have had it once before. It is a dream of grey-haired men like you, in darkened rooms by night, robbing the sleepers of their gold. Up, up!" The old man shook in every joint, and folded his hands like one who prays.

"Not to me!" said the child, "not to me—to Heaven, to save us from such deeds. This dream is too real. I cannot sleep, I cannot stay here, I cannot leave you alone under the roof where such dreams come. Up! We must fly."

He looked at her as if she were a spirit—she might have been, for all the look of earth she had—and trembled more and more.

"There's no time to lose; I will not lose one minute," said the child. "Up! and away with me!"

"To-night!" murmured the old man.

"Yes, to-night," replied the child. "To-morrow night will be too late. The dream will have come again. Nothing but flight can save us. Up!"

The old man rose from his bed, his forehead bedewed with the cold sweat of fear, and, bending before the child as if she had been an angel messenger sent to lead him where she would, made ready to follow her. She took him by the hand and led him on. As they passed the door of the room he had proposed to rob, she shuddered and looked up into his face. What a white face was that, and with what a look did he meet hers!

She took him to her own chamber, and, still holding him by the hand as if she feared to lose him for an instant, gathered together the little stock she had, and hung her basket on her arm. The old man took his wallet from her hands and strapped it on his shoulders—his staff, too, she had brought away—and then she led him forth.

Through the strait streets, and narrow crooked outskirts, their trembling feet passed quickly. Up the steep hill, too, crowned by the old grey castle, they toiled with rapid steps, and had not once looked behind.

But as they drew nearer the ruined walls, the moon rose in all her gentle glory, and, from their venerable age, garlanded with ivy, moss, and waving grass, the child looked back upon the sleeping town, deep in the valley's shade, and on the far-off river with its winding track of light, and on the distant hills; and as she did so, she clasped the hand she held, less firmly, and bursting into tears, fell upon the old man's neck.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-THIRD.

Her momentary weakness past, the child again summoned the resolution which had until now sustained her, and, endeavouring to keep steadily in her view the one idea, that they were flying from disgrace and crime, and that her grandfather's preservation must depend solely upon her firmness, unaided by one word of advice or any helping hand, urged him onward, and looked back no more.

While he, subdued and abashed, seemed to crouch before her, and to shrink and cower down as if in the presence of some superior creature; the child herself was sensible of a new feeling within her, which elevated her nature, and inspired her with an energy and confidence she had never known. There was no divided responsibility now; the whole burden of their two lives had fallen upon her, and henceforth she must think and act for both. "I have saved him," she thought. "In all dangers and distresses, I will remember that."

At any other time the recollection of having deserted the friend who had shown them so much homely kindness, without a word of justification—the thought that they were guilty, in appearance, of treachery and ingratitude—even the having parted from the two sisters—would have filled her with sorrow and regret. But now, all other considerations were lost in the new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life; and the very desperation of their condition roused and stimulated her.

In the pale moonlight, which lent a wanness of its own, the delicate face where thoughtful care already mingled with the winning grace and loveliness of youth, the too bright eye, the spiritual head, the lips that pressed each other with such high resolve and courage of the heart, the slight figure, firm in its bearing and yet so very weak, told their silent tale; but told it only to the wind that rustled by, which, taking up its burden, carried, perhaps to some mo-

ther's pillow, faint dreams of childhood fading in its bloom, and resting in the sleep that knows no waking.

The night crept on apace, the moon went down, the stars grew pale and dim, and morning, cold as they, slowly approached. Then, from behind a distant hill, the noble sun rose up, driving the mists in phantom shapes before it, and clearing the earth of their ghostly forms till darkness came again. When it had climbed higher into the sky, and there was warmth in its cheerful beams, they laid them down to sleep, upon a bank, hard by some water.

But Nell retained her grasp upon the old man's arm, and long after he was slumbering soundly, watched him with untiring eyes. Fatigue stole over her at last; her grasp relaxed, tightened, relaxed again, and they slept side by side.

A confused sound of voices, mingling with her dreams, awoke her. A man of very uncouth and rough appearance was standing over them, and two of his companions were looking on from a long heavy boat which had come close to the bank while they were sleeping. The boat had neither oar nor sail, but was towed by a couple of horses, who, with the rope to which they were harnessed slack and dripping in the water, were resting on the path.

"Holloa!" — said the man, roughly. — "What 's the matter here, eh?"

"We were only asleep, sir," said Nell. "We have been walking all night."

"A pair of queer travellers to be walking all night," observed the man who had first accosted them. "One of you is a trifle too old for that sort of work, and the other a trifle too young. Where are you going?"

Nell faltered, and pointed at hazard towards the West, upon which the man inquired if she meant a certain town which he named. Nell, to avoid further questioning, said "Yes, that was the place."

"Where have you come from?" was the next question; and this being an easier one to answer, Nell mentioned the name of the village in which their friend, the schoolmaster, dwelt, as being less likely to be known to the men, or to provoke further inquiry.

"I thought somebody had been robbing and ill-using you, might be," said the man. "That 's all. Good day."

Returning his salute, and feeling greatly relieved by his departure, Nell looked after him as he mounted one of the horses, and the boat went on. It had not gone very far when it stopped again, and she saw the man beckoning to her.

"Did you call to me?" said Nell, running up to them.

"You may go with us, if you like," replied one of those in the boat. "We 're going to the same place."

The child hesitated a moment, and thinking, as she had thought with great trepidation more than once before, that the men whom she had seen with her grandfather might, perhaps, in their eagerness for the booty, follow them, and regaining their influence over him, set her's at nought; and that if they went with these men, all traces of them must surely be lost at that spot; determined to accept the offer. The boat came close to the bank again, and before she had had any time for further consideration, she and her grandfather were on board, and gliding smoothly down the canal.

The sun shone pleasantly upon the bright water, which was sometimes shaded by trees, and sometimes open to a wide extent of country, intersected by running streams, and rich with wooded hills, cultivated land, and sheltered farms. Now and then a village, with its modest spire, thatched roofs and gable-ends, would peep out from among the trees; and more than once a distant town, with great church towers looming through its smoke, and high factories or workshops, rising above the mass of houses, would come in view, and, by the length of time it lingered in the distance, show them how slowly they travelled. Their way lay, for the most part, through the low grounds, and open plains; and except these distant places, and occasionally some men working in the fields, or lounging on the bridges under which they passed, to see them creep along, nothing encroached on their monotonous and secluded track.

Nell was rather disheartened when they stopped at a kind of wharf late in the afternoon, to learn from one of the men that they would not reach their place of destination until next day, and that if she had no provision with her, she had better buy it there. She had but a few pence, having already bargained with them for some bread, but even of these it was necessary to be very careful, as they were on their way to an utterly strange place, with no resource whatever. A small loaf and a morsel of cheese, therefore, were all she could afford, and with these she took her place in the boat again, and, after half an hour's delay, during which the men were drinking at the public-house, proceeded on the journey.

They brought some beer and spirits into the boat with them, and what with drinking freely before, and again now, were soon on a fair way of being quarrelsome and in-

toxicated. Avoiding the small cabin, therefore, which was very dark and filthy, and to which they often invited both her and her grandfather, Nell sat in the open air with the old man by her side, listening to their boisterous hosts with a palpitating heart, and almost wishing herself safe on shore again, though she should have to walk all night.

They were, in truth, very rugged noisy fellows, and quite brutal among themselves, though civil enough to their two passengers. Thus, when a quarrel arose between the man who was steering and his friend in the cabin, upon the question who had first suggested the propriety of offering Nell some beer, and when the quarrel led to a scuffle in which they beat each other fearfully, to her inexpressible terror, neither visited his displeasure upon her, but each contented himself with venting it on his adversary, on whom, in addition to blows, he bestowed a variety of compliments, which, happily for the child, were conveyed in terms, to her quite unintelligible. The difference was finally adjusted, by the man who had come out of the cabin knocking the other into it head first, and taking the helm into his own hands, without evincing the least discomposure himself, or causing any in his friend, who, being of a tolerably strong constitution and perfectly inured to such trifles, went to sleep as he was, with his heels upwards, and in a couple of minutes or so was snoring comfortably.

By this time it was night again, and though the child felt cold, being but poorly clad, her anxious thoughts were far removed from her own suffering or uneasiness, and busily engaged in endeavouring to devise some scheme for their joint subsistence. The same spirit which had supported her on the previous night, upheld and sustained her now. Her grandfather lay sleeping safely at her side, and the crime, to which his madness urged him, was not committed. That was her comfort.

How every circumstance of her short, eventful life, came thronging into her mind as they travelled on. Slight incidents, never thought of or remembered until now; faces seen once and ever since forgotten; words spoken and scarcely heeded at the time; scenes of a year ago and those of yesterday mixing up and linking themselves together; familiar places shaping themselves out in the darkness from things which, when approached, were of all others the most remote and most unlike them; sometimes a strange confusion in her mind relative to the occasion of her being there, and the place to which she was going, and the people she was with; and imagination suggesting remarks and questions which sounded so plainly in her ears, that she would start, and turn, and be almost tempted to reply; — all the fancies and contradictions common in watching and excitement and restless change of place, beset the child.

She happened, while she was thus en-

gaged, to encounter the face of the man on deck, in whom the sentimental stage of drunkenness had now succeeded to the boisterous, and who, taking from his mouth a short pipe, quilted over with string for its longer preservation, requested that she would oblige him with a song.

"You 've got a very pretty voice, a very soft eye, and a very strong memory," said this gentleman; "the voice and eye I 've got evidence for, and the memory 's an opinion of my own. And I'm never wrong. Let me hear a song this minute."

"I don't think I know one, sir," returned Nell.

"You know forty-seven songs," said the man, with a gravity which admitted of no altercation on the subject. "Forty-seven 's your number. Let me hear one of 'em — the best. Give me a song this minute."

Not knowing what might be the consequences of irritating her friend, and trembling with the fear of doing so, poor Nell sang him some little ditty which she had learned in happier times, and which was so agreeable to his ear, that on its conclusion, he in the same peremptory manner requested to be favoured with another, to which he was so obliging as to roar a chorus to no particular tune, and with no words at all, but which amply made up in its amazing energy for its deficiency in other respects. The noise of this vocal performance awakened the other man, who, staggering upon deck, and shaking his late opponent by the hand, swore that singing was his pride and joy and chief delight, and that he desired no better entertainment. With a third call, more imperative than either of the two former, Nell felt obliged to comply, and this time a chorus was maintained not only by the two men together, but also by the third man on horseback, who, being by his position debarred from a nearer participation in the revels of the night, roared when his companions roared, and rent the very air. In this way, with little cessation, and singing the same songs again and again, the tired and exhausted child kept them in good-humour all that night; and many a cottager, who was roused from his soundest sleep by the discordant chorus as it floated away upon the wind, hid his head beneath the bed-clothes and trembled at the sounds.

At length the morning dawned. It was no sooner light than it began to rain heavily. As the child could not endure the intolerable vapours of the cabin, they covered her, in return for her exertions, with some pieces of sail-cloth and ends of tarpaulin, which sufficed to keep her tolerably dry and to shelter her grandfather besides. As the day advanced the rain increased. At noon it poured down more hopelessly and heavily than ever, without the faintest promise of abatement.

They had for some time been gradually approaching the place for which they were bound. The water had become thicker and dirtier; other barges coming from it passed them frequently; the paths of coal ash and huts of red staring brick, marked the vicinity of some great manufacturing town; while scattered streets and houses, and smoke from distant furnaces, indicated that they were already in the outskirts. Now, the clustered roofs, and piles of buildings trembling with the working of engines, and dimly resounding with their shrieks and throbbings; the tall chimneys vomiting forth a black vapour, which hung in a dense ill-favoured cloud above the house-tops and filled the air with gloom; the clank of hammers beating upon iron, the roar of busy streets and noisy crowds, gradually augmenting until all the various sounds blended into one and none was distinguishable for itself, announced the termination of their journey.

The boat floated into the wharf to which it belonged. The men were occupied directly. The child and her grandfather, after waiting in vain to thank them, or ask them whither they should go, passed through a dirty lane into a crowded street, and stood amid its din and tumult, and in the pouring rain, as strange, bewildered, and confused, as if they had lived a thousand years before, and were raised from the dead and placed there by a miracle.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-FOURTH.

The throng of people hurried by, in two opposite streams, with no symptoms of cessation or exhaustion; intent upon their own affairs; and undisturbed in their business speculations, by the roar of carts and wagons laden with clashing wares, the slipping of horses' feet upon the wet and greasy pavement, the rattling of the rain on windows and umbrella-tops, the jostling of the more impatient passengers, and all the noise and tumult of a crowded street in the high tide of its occupation: while the two poor strangers, stunned and bewildered by the hurry they beheld but had no part in, looked mournfully on; feeling amidst the crowd a solitude which has no parallel but in the thirst of the shipwrecked mariner, who, tost to and fro upon the billows of a mighty ocean, his red eyes blinded by looking on the water which hems him in on every side, has not one drop to cool his burning tongue.

They withdrew into a low archway for shelter from the rain, and watched the faces of those who passed, to find in one among them a ray of encouragement or hope.— Some frowned, some smiled, some muttered to themselves; some made slight gestures, as if anticipating the conversation in which they would shortly be engaged; some wore the cunning look of bargaining and plotting, some were anxious and eager, some slow and dull; in some countenances were written gain; in others loss. It was like being in the confidence of all these people to stand quietly there, looking into their faces as they flitted past. In busy places, where each man has an object of his own, and feels assured that every other man has his, his character and purpose are written broadly in his face. In the public walks and lounges of a town, people go to see and to be seen, and there the same expression, with but little variety, is repeated a hundred times. The working-day faces come nearer to the truth, and let it out more plainly.

Falling into that kind of abstraction which such a solitude awakens, the child continued to gaze upon the passing crowd with a wondering interest, amounting almost to a temporary forgetfulness of her own condition. But cold, wet, hunger, want of rest, and lack of any place in which to lay her aching head, soon brought her thoughts back to the point whence they had strayed. No one passed who seemed to take notice of them, or to whom she durst appeal. After some time, they left their place of refuge from the weather, and mingled with the concourse.

Evening came on. They were still wandering up and down, with fewer people about them, but with the same sense of solitude in their own breasts, and the same indifference from all around. The lights in the streets and shops made them feel yet more desolate, for with their help, night and darkness seemed to come on faster. Shivering with the cold and damp, ill in body, and sick to death at heart, the child needed her utmost firmness and resolution even to creep along.

Why had they ever come to this noisy town, when there were peaceful country places, in which, at least, they might have hungered and thirsted, with less suffering than in its squalid strife. They were but an atom, here, in a mountain heap of misery, the very sight of which increased their hopelessness and suffering.

The child had not only to endure the accumulated hardships of their destitute condition, but to bear the reproaches of her grandfather, who began to murmur at having been led away from their late abode, and demand that they should return to it. Being now penniless, and no relief or prospect of relief appearing, they retraced their steps through the deserted streets, and went back to the wharf, hoping to find the boat in which they had come, and to be allowed to sleep on board that night. But here again they were disappointed, for the gate was closed, and some fierce dogs, barking at their approach, obliged them to retreat.

"We must sleep in the open air, to-night, dear," said the child, in a weak voice, as they turned away from this last repulse; "and to-morrow we will beg our way to some quiet part of the country, and try to earn our bread in very humble work."

"Why did you bring me here?" returned the old man, fiercely. "I cannot bear these close eternal streets. We came from a quiet part. Why did you force me to leave it?"

"Because I must have that dream I told you of, no more," said the child, with a momentary firmness that lost itself in tears; "and we must live among poor people, or it will come again. Dear grandfather, you

are old and weak, I know; but look at me. I never will complain if you will not; but I have some suffering, indeed."

"Ah! poor, houseless, wandering, motherless child!" cried the old man, clasping his hands, and gazing, as if for the first time, upon her travel-stained dress, and bruised and swollen feet; "has all my agony of care brought her to this at last! Was I a happy man once, and have I lost happiness and all I had, for this!"

"If we were in the country now," said the child, with assumed cheerfulness, as they walked on looking about them for a shelter, "we should find some good old tree, stretching out his green arms as if he loved us, and nodding and rustling as if he would have us fall asleep, thinking of him while he watched. Please God, we shall be there soon—to-morrow or next day at the farthest—and in the meantime let us think, dear, that it was a good thing we came here; for we are lost in the crowd and hurry of this place, and if any cruel people should pursue us, they could surely never trace us farther. There's comfort in that. And here's a deep old doorway—very dark, but quite dry, and warm too, for the wind don't blow in here — What's that!"

Uttering a half-shriek, she recoiled from a black figure which came suddenly out of the dark recess in which they were about to take refuge, and stood still looking at them.

"Speak again," it said; "do I know the voice?"

"No," replied the child, timidly; "we are strangers, and having no money for a night's lodging, we were going to rest here."

There was a feeble lamp at no great distance; the only one in the place, which was a kind of square yard, but sufficient to show how poor and mean it was. To this, the figure beckoned them; at the same time drawing within its rays, as if to show that it had no desire to conceal itself or take them at an advantage.

The form was that of a man, miserably clad, and begrimed with smoke, which, perhaps by its contrast with the natural colour of his skin, made him look paler than he really was. That he was naturally of a very wan and pallid aspect, however, his hollow cheeks, sharp features, and sunken eyes, no less than a certain look of patient endurance, sufficiently testified. His voice was harsh by nature, but not brutal; and though his face — besides possessing the characteristics already mentioned — was overshadowed by a quantity of long dark hair, its expression was neither ferocious nor cruel.

"How came you to think of resting there?" he said. "Or how," he added, looking more attentively at the child, "do you come to want a place of rest at this time of night?"

"Our misfortunes," the grandfather answered, "are the cause."

"Do you know," said the man, looking still more earnestly at Nell, "how wet she is, and that the damp streets are not a place for her?"

"I know it well, God help me," he replied. "What can I do?"

The man looked at Nell again, and gently touched her garments, from which the rain was running off in little streams. "I can give you warmth," he said, after a pause; "nothing else. Such lodging as I have is in that house," pointing to the doorway from which he had emerged, "but she is safer and better there than here. The fire is in a rough place, but you can pass the night beside it safely, if you'll trust your selves to me. You see that red light yonder?"

They raised their eyes, and saw a lurid glare hanging in the dark sky; the dull reflection of some distant fire.

"It's not far," said the man. Shall I take you there? You were going to sleep upon cold bricks; I can give you a bed of warm ashes—nothing better."

Without waiting for any further reply than he saw in their looks, he took Nell in his arms, and bade the old man follow.

Carrying her as tenderly, and as easily, too, as if she had been an infant, and showing himself both swift and sure of foot, he led the way through what appeared to be the poorest and most wretched quarter of the town; not turning aside to avoid the overflowing kennels or running water-spouts, but holding his course, regardless of such obstructions, and making his way straight through them. They had proceeded thus in silence for some quarter of an hour, and had lost sight of the glare to which he had pointed, in the dark and narrow ways by which they had come, when it suddenly burst upon them again, streaming up from the high chimney of a building close before them.

"This is the place," he said, pausing at a door to put Nell down and take her hand. "Don't be afraid. There's nobody here will harm you."

It needed a strong confidence in this assurance to induce them to enter, and what they saw inside did not diminish their apprehension and alarm. In a large and lofty building, supported by pillars of iron, with great black apertures in the upper walls, open to the external air; echoing to the roof with the beating of hammers and

roar of furnaces, mingled with the hissing of red-hot metal plunged into water, and a hundred strange unearthly noises never heard elsewhere; in this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke, dimly and fitfully seen, flushed and tormented by the burning fires, and wielding great weapons, a faulty blow from any one of which must have crushed some workman's skull, a number of men laboured like giants. Others, reposing upon heaps of coals or ashes, with their faces turned to the black vault above, slept or rested from their toil. Others, again, opening the white-hot furnace doors, cast fuel on the flames, which came rushing and roaring forth to meet it, and licked it up like oil. Others drew forth, with clashing noise upon the ground, great sheets of glowing steel, emitting an insupportable heat, and a dull deep light like that which reddens in the eyes of savage beasts.

Through these bewildering sights and deafening sounds, their conductor led them to where, in a dark portion of the building, one furnace burnt by night and day—so, at least, they gathered from the motion of his lips, for, as yet, they could only see him speak: not hear him. The man who had been watching this fire, and whose task was ended for the present, gladly withdrew, and left them with their friend; who, spreading Nell's little cloak upon a heap of ashes, and showing her where she could hang her outer-clothes to dry, signed to her and the old man to lie down and sleep. For himself, he took his station on a rugged mat before the furnace-door, and resting his chin upon his hands, watched the flame as it shone through the iron chinks, and the white ashes as they fell into their bright hot grave below.

The warmth of her bed, hard and humble as it was, combined with the great fa-

tigue she had undergone, soon caused the tumult of the place to fall with a gentler sound upon the child's tired ears, and was not long in lulling her to sleep. The old man was stretched beside her, and with her hand upon his neck she lay and dreamed.

It was yet night when she awoke, nor did she know how long, or for how short a time, she had slept. But she found herself protected, both from any cold air that might find its way into the building, and from the scorching heat, by some of the workmen's clothes; and glancing at their friend, saw that he sat in exactly the same attitude, looking with a fixed earnestness of attention towards the fire, and keeping so very still that he did not even seem to breathe. She lay in the state between sleeping and waking, looking so long at his motionless figure that, at length, she almost

feared he had died as he sat there; and, softly rising and drawing close to him, ventured to whisper in his ear.

He moved, and glancing from her to the place she had lately occupied, as if to assure himself that it was really the child so near him, looked inquiringly into her face.

"I feared you were ill," she said. "The other men are all in motion, and you are so very quiet."

"They leave me to myself," he replied. "They know my humour. They laugh at me, but don't harm me in it. See yonder, there—that's *my* friend."

"The fire?" said the child.

"It has been alive as long as I have," the man made answer. "We talk and think together all night long."

The child glanced quickly at him in her surprise, but he had turned his eyes in their former direction, and was musing as before.

"It's like a book to me," he said,—"the only book I ever learned to read; and many an old story it tells me. It's music, for I should know its voice among a thousand, and there are other voices in its roar. It has its pictures, too. You don't know how many strange faces and different scenes I trace in the red-hot coals. It's my memory, that fire, and shows me all my life."

The child, bending down to listen to his words, could not help remarking with what brightened eyes he continued to speak and muse.

"Yes," he said, with a faint smile, "it was the same when I was quite a baby, and crawled about it till I fell asleep. My father watched it then."

"Had you no mother?" asked the child.

"No; she was dead. Women work hard in these parts. She worked herself to death, they told me; and, as they said so then, the fire has gone on saying the same thing ever since. I suppose it was true. I have always believed it."

"Were you brought up here, then?" said the child.

"Summer and winter," he replied.—"Secretly at first, but when they found it out, they let him keep me here. So the fire nursed me—the same fire. It has never gone out."

"You are fond of it?" said the child.

"Of course I am. He died before it. I saw him fall down—just there, where those ashes are burning now—and wondered, I remember, why it didn't help him."

"Have you been here ever since?" asked the child.

"Ever since I came to watch it; but there was a while between, and a very cold dreary while it was. It burnt all the time, though, and roared and leaped when I came back, as it used to do in our play days. You may guess from looking at me what kind of child I was, but for all the difference between us I was a child, and when I saw you in the street to-night, you put me in mind of myself as I was after he died, and made me wish to bring you to the old fire. I thought of those old times again, when I saw you sleeping by it. You should be sleeping now. Lie down again, poor child, lie down again."

With that he led her to her rude couch, and covering her with the clothes with which she had found herself enveloped when she awoke, returned to his seat, whence he removed no more, unless to feed the furnace, but remained motionless as a statue. The child continued to watch him for a little time, but soon yielded to the drowsiness that came upon her, and, in the dark strange place, and on the heap of ashes, slept as peacefully, as if the room had been a palace chamber, and the bed, a bed of down.

When she awoke again, broad day was shining through the lofty openings in the walls, and, stealing in slanting rays but midway down, seemed to make the building darker than it had been at night. The clang and tumult were still going on, and the remorseless fires were burning fiercely as before; for few changes of night and day brought rest or quiet there.

Her friend parted his breakfast—a scanty mess of coffee and some coarse bread—with the child and her grandfather, and inquired whither they were going. She told him that they sought some distant country place, remote from towns, or even other villages, and with a faltering tongue inquired what road they would do best to take.

"I know little of the country," he said, shaking his head; "for such as I pass all our lives before our furnace doors, and seldom go forth to breathe. But there are such places yonder."

"And far from here?" said Nell.

"Ay, surely. How could they be near us, and be green and fresh? The road lies, too, through miles and miles, all lighted up by fires like ours—a strange black road, and one that would frighten you by night."

"We are here, and must go on," said the child, boldly, for she saw that the old man listened with anxious ears to this account.

"Rough people—paths never made for little feet like yours—a dismal, blighted way—is there no turning back, my child?"

"There is none," cried Nell, pressing forward. "If you can direct us, do. If not, pray do not seek to turn us from our

purpose. Indeed you do not know the danger that we shun, and how right and true we are in flying from it, or you would not try to stop us, I am sure you would not."

"God forbid, if it is so!" said their uncouth protector, glancing from the eager child to her grandfather, who hung his head and bent his eyes upon the ground. "I'll direct you from the door, the best I can. I wish I could do more."

He showed them, then, by which road they must leave the town, and what course they should hold when they had gained it. He lingered so long on these instructions, that the child with a fervent blessing tore herself away, and staid to hear no more.

But before they had reached the corner of the lane, the man came running after them, and pressing her hand, left something in it — two old, battered, smoke-encrusted penny pieces. Who knows but they shone as brightly in the eyes of angels, as golden gifts that have been chronicled on tombs?

And thus they separated: the child to lead her sacred charge further from guilt and shame, and the labourer to attach a fresh interest to the spot where his guests had slept; and read new histories in his furnace fire.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-FIFTH.

In all their journeying, they had never longed so ardently, they had never so pined and wearied, for the freedom of pure air and open country, as now. No, not even on that memorable morning, when, deserting their old home, they abandoned themselves to the mercies of a strange world, and left all the dumb and senseless things they had known and loved, behind — not even then, had they so yearned for the fresh solitudes of wood, hill-side, and field, as now; when the noise and dirt and vapour, of the great manufacturing town, reeking with lean misery and hungry wretchedness, hemmed them in on every side, and seemed to shut out hope, and render escape impossible.

"Two days and nights!" thought the child. "He said two days and nights we should have to spend among such scenes as these. Oh! if we live to reach the country once again, if we get clear of these dreadful places, though it is only to lie down and die, with what a grateful heart I shall thank God for so much mercy!"

With thoughts like this, and with some vague design of travelling to a great distance among streams and mountains, where only very poor and simple people lived, and where they might maintain themselves by very humble helping work on farms, free from such terrors as that from which they fled, — the child, with no resource but the poor man's gift, and no encouragement but that which flowed from her own heart, and its sense of the truth and right of what she did, nerved herself to this last journey, and boldly pursued her task.

"We shall be very slow to-day, dear," she said, as they toiled painfully through the streets; "my feet are sore, and I have pains in all my limbs from the wet of yesterday. I saw that he looked at us and thought of that, when he said how long we should be upon the road."

"It was a dreary way he told us of," returned her grandfather, piteously. "Is there no other road? Will you not let me go some other way than this?"

"Places lie beyond these," said the child, firmly, "where we may live in peace, and be tempted to do no harm. We will take the road that promises to have that end, and we would not turn out of it, if it were a hundred times worse than our fears lead us to expect. We would not, dear, would we?"

"No," replied the old man, wavering in his voice, no less than in his manner. "No. Let us go on. I am ready. I am quite ready, Nell."

The child walked with more difficulty than she had led her companion to expect, for the pains that racked her joints were of no common severity, and exertion increased them. But they wrung from her no complaint, or look of suffering; and although the two travellers proceeded very slowly, they did proceed; and clearing the town in course of time, began to feel that they were fairly on their way.

A long suburb of red brick houses—some with patches of garden-ground, where coal dust and factory smoke darkened the shrinking leaves, and coarse rank flowers; and where the struggling vegetation sickened

and sank under the hot breath of the kiln and furnace, making them by its presence seem yet more blighting and unwholesome than in the town itself,—a long, flat, straggling suburb passed, they came by slow degrees upon a cheerless region, where not a blade of grass was seen to grow; where not a bud put forth its promise in the spring; where nothing green could live but on the surface of the stagnant pools, which here and there lay idly sweltering by the black road-side.

Advancing more and more into the shadow of this mournful place, its dark depressing influence stole upon their spirits, and filled them with a dismal gloom. On every side, and as far as the eye could see into the heavy distance, tall chimneys, crowding on each other, and presenting that endless repetition of the same dull, ugly, form, which is the horror of oppressive dreams, poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and made foul the melancholy air. On mounds of ashes by the way-side, sheltered only by a few rough boards, or rotten pent-house roofs, strange engines spun and writhed like tortured creatures; clanking their iron chains, shrieking in their rapid whirl from time to time as though in torment unendurable, and making the ground tremble with their agonies. Dismantled houses here and there appeared, tottering to the earth, propped up by fragments of others that had fallen down, unroofed, windowless, blackened, desolate, but yet inhabited. Men, women, children, wan in their looks and ragged in attire, tended the engines, fed their tributary fires, begged upon the road, or scowled half-naked from the doorless houses. Then came more of the wrathful monsters, whose like they almost seemed to be in their wildness and their untamed air, screeching and turning round and round again; and still, before, behind, and to the right and left, was the same interminable perspective of brick towers, never ceasing in their black vomit, blasting all things living or inanimate, shutting out the face of day, and closing on all these horrors with a dense dark cloud.

But night-time in this dreadful spot!—night, when the smoke was changed to fire; when every chimney spirted up its flame; and places, that had been dark vaults all day, now shone red-hot, with figures moving to and fro within their blazing jaws, and calling to one another with hoarse cries—night, when the noise of every strange machine was aggravated by the darkness when the people near them looked wilder and more savage; when bands of unemployed labourers paraded in the roads, or clustered torch-light round their leaders, who told them in stern language of their wrongs, and urged them on to frightful cries and threats; when maddened men, armed with sword and firebrand, spurning the tears and prayers of women who would restrain them, rushed forth on errands of terror and destruction, to work no ruin half so surely as their own—night, when carts came rumbling by, filled with rude coffins (for contagious disease and death had been busy with the living crops); when orphans cried, and distracted women shrieked and followed in their wake—night, when some called for bread, and some for drink to drown their cares; and some with tears, and some with staggering feet, and some with bloodshot eyes, went brooding home—night, which, unlike the night that Heaven sends on earth, brought with it no peace, nor quiet, nor signs of blessed sleep,—who shall tell the terrors of the night to that young wandering child!

And yet she lay down, with nothing between her and the sky; and with no fears for herself, for she was past it now, put up a prayer for the poor old man. So very weak and spent she felt, so very calm and unresisting, that she had no thoughts of any wants of her own, but prayed that God would raise up some friend for *him*. She tried to recall the way they had come, and to look in the direction where the fire by which they had slept last night was burning. She had forgotten to ask the name of the poor man, their friend, and when she had remembered him in her prayers, it seemed ungrateful not to turn one look towards the spot where he was watching.

A penny loaf was all they had had that day. It was very little, but even hunger was forgotten in the strange tranquillity that crept over her senses. She lay down very gently, and, with a quiet smile upon her face, fell into a slumber. It was not like sleep—and yet it must have been, or why those pleasant dreams of the little scholar all night long!

Morning came. Much weaker, diminished powers even of sight and hearing, and yet the child made no complaint—perhaps would have made none, even if she had not that inducement to be silent, travelling by her side. She felt a hopelessness of their ever being extricated together from that forlorn place, a dull conviction that she was very ill, perhaps dying; but no fear or anxiety.

A loathing of food, that she was not conscious of until they expended their last penny in the purchase of another loaf, prevented her partaking even of this poor repast. Her grandfather ate greedily, which she was glad to see.

Their way lay through the same scenes as yesterday, with no variety or improvement. There was the same thick air, difficult to breathe; the same blighted ground, the same hopeless prospect, the same misery and distress. Objects appeared more dim, the noise less, the path more rugged and uneven, for sometimes she stumbled, and became roused, as it were, in the effort to prevent herself from falling. Poor child! the cause was in her tottering feet.

Towards the afternoon, her grandfather complained bitterly of hunger. She approached one of the wretched hovels by the way-side, and knocked with her hand upon the door.

"What would you have here?" said a gaunt miserable man, opening it.

"Charity. A morsel of bread."

"Do you see that?" returned the man, hoarsely, pointing to a kind of bundle on the ground. "That's a dead child. I and five hundred other men were thrown out of work three months ago. That is my third dead child, and last. Do you think I have charity to bestow, or a morsel of bread to spare?"

The child recoiled from the door, and it closed upon her. Impelled by strong necessity, she knocked at another, a neighbouring one, which, yielding to the slight pressure of her hand, flew open.

It seemed that a couple of poor families lived in this hovel, for two women, each among children of her own, occupied different portions of the room. In the centre stood a grave gentleman in black, who appeared to have just entered, and who held by the arm a boy.

"Here, woman," he said, "here's your deaf and dumb son. You may thank me for restoring him to you. He was brought before me this morning, charged with theft and with any other boy it would have gone hard, I assure you. But as I had compassion on his infirmities, and thought he might have learnt no better, I have managed to bring him back to you. Take more care of him for the future."

"And won't you give me back *my* son!" said the other woman, hastily rising and confronting him. "Wont you give me back *my* son, sir, who was transported for the same offence!"

"Was *he* deaf and dumb, woman!" asked the gentleman, sternly.

"Was he not, sir!"

"You know he was not."

"He was," cried the woman. "He was deaf, dumb, and blind, to all that was good

and right, from his cradle. Her boy may have learnt no better! where did mine learn better? where could he? who was there to teach him better, or where was it to be learnt?"

"Peace, woman," said the gentleman, "your boy was in possession of all his senses."

"He was," cried the mother; "and he was the more easy to be led astray because he had them. If you save this boy because he may not know right from wrong, why did you not save mine who was never taught the difference? You gentlemen have as good a right to punish her boy, that God has kept in ignorance of sound and speech, as you have to punish mine, that you kept in ignorance yourselves. How many of the girls and boys—ah, men and women, too,—that are brought before you, and you don't pity, are deaf and dumb in their minds, and go wrong in that state, and are punished in that state, body and soul, while you gentlemen are quarrelling among yourselves whether they ought to learn this or that?—Be a just man, sir, and give me back my son."

"You are desperate," said the gentleman, taking out his snuff-box, "and I am sorry for you."

"I *am* desperate," returned the woman, "and you have made me so. Give me back my son, to work for these helpless children. Be a just man, sir, and for God's sake, as you have had mercy upon this boy, give me back my son!"

The child had seen and heard enough to know that this was not a place at which to ask for alms. She led the old man softly from the door, and they pursued their journey.

With less and less of hope or strength, as they went on, but with an undiminished resolution not to betray by any word or sign her sinking state, so long as she had energy to move, the child, throughout the remainder of that hard day, compelled herself to proceed; not even stopping to rest as frequently as usual, to compensate in some measure for the tardy pace at which she was obliged to walk. Evening was drawing on, but had not closed in, when—still travelling among the same dismal objects—they came to a busy town.

Faint and spiritless as they were, its streets were insupportable. After humbly asking for relief at some few doors and being repulsed, they agreed to make their way out of it as speedily as they could, and try if the inmates of any lone house beyond, would have more pity on their exhausted state.

They were dragging themselves along through the last street, and the child felt that the time was close at hand when her enfeebled powers would bear no more.—There appeared before them, at this juncture, going in the same direction as themselves, a traveller on foot, who, with a portmanteau strapped to his back, leant upon a stout stick, as he walked, and read from a book which he held in his other hand.

It was not an easy matter to come up with him, and beseech his aid, for he walked fast, and was a little distance in advance. At length he stopped to look more attentively at some passage in his book. Animated with a ray of hope, the child shot on before her grandfather, and, going close to the stranger without rousing him by the sound of her footsteps, began in a few faint words to implore his help.

He turned his head, the child clapped her hands together, uttered a wild shriek and fell senseless at his feet.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-SIXTH.

It was the poor schoolmaster. No other than the poor schoolmaster. Scarcely less moved and surprised by the sight of the child than she had been on recognising him, he stood for a moment silent and confounded by this unexpected apparition, without even the presence of mind to raise her from the ground.

But quickly recovering his self-possession, he threw down his stick and book, and dropping on one knee beside her, endeavoured by such simple means as occurred to him, to restore her to herself; while her grandfather, standing idly by, wrung his hands, and implored her with many endearing expressions to speak to him, were it only a word.

"She is quite exhausted," said the schoolmaster, glancing upward into his face. "You have taxed her powers too far, friend."

"She is perishing of want," rejoined the old man. "I never thought how weak and ill she was, till now."

Casting a look upon him, half-reproachful and half-compassionate, the schoolmaster took the child in his arms, and bidding the old man gather up her little basket and follow him directly, bore her away at his utmost speed.

There was a small inn within sight, to which it would seem he had been directing his steps when so unexpectedly overtaken. Towards this place he hurried with his unconscious burden, and rushing into the kitchen, and calling upon the company there assembled to make way for God's sake, deposited it on a chair before the fire.

The company, who rose in confusion upon the schoolmaster's entrance, did as people usually do under such circumstances. Everybody called for his or her favourite remedy, which nobody brought; each cried for more air, at the same time carefully excluding what air there was, by closing round the object of sympathy; and all wondered why somebody else didn't do, what it never appeared to occur to them might be done by themselves.

The landlady, however, who possessed more readiness and activity than any of them, and who had withal a quicker perception of the merits of the case, soon came running in with a little hot brandy and water; followed by her servant-girl, carrying vinegar, hartshorn, smelling-salts, and such other restoratives; which, being duly administered, recovered the child so far as to enable her to thank them in a faint voice, and to extend her hand to the poor schoolmaster, who stood with an anxious face, hard by. Without suffering her to speak another word, or so much as to stir

a finger any more, the women straightway carried her off to bed; and having covered her up warm, bathed her cold feet, and wrapped them in flannel, they despatched a messenger for the doctor.

The doctor, who was a red-nosed gentleman with a great bunch of seals dangling below a waistcoat of ribbed black satin, arrived with all speed, and taking his seat by the bedside of poor Nell, drew out his watch, and felt her pulse. Then he looked at her tongue, then he felt her pulse again, and while he did so, he eyed the half-emptied wine-glass as if in profound abstraction.

"I should give her—" said the doctor at length, "a tea-spoonful, every now and then, of hot brandy and water."

"Why, that's exactly what we've done, sir!" said the delighted landlady.

"I should also," observed the doctor, who had passed the foot-bath on the stairs, "I should also," said the doctor, in the voice of an oracle, "put her feet in hot water, and wrap them up in flannel. I should likewise," said the doctor, with increased solemnity, "give her something light for supper—the wing of a roasted fowl now—"

"Why goodness gracious me sir, it's cooking at the kitchen fire this instant!" cried the landlady. And so indeed it was, for the schoolmaster had ordered it to be put down, and it was getting on so well that the doctor might have smelt it if he had tried—perhaps he did.

"You may then," said the doctor, rising gravely, "give her a glass of hot mulled wine, if she likes wine—"

"And a toast, sir?" suggested the landlady.

"Ay," said the doctor, in the tone of a man who makes a dignified concession. "And a toast—of bread. But be very particular to make it of bread, if you please, ma'am."

With which parting injunction, slowly and portentously delivered, the doctor departed, leaving the whole house in admiration of that wisdom which tallied so closely with their own. Everybody said he was a very shrewd doctor indeed, and knew perfectly what people's constitutions were; which there appears some reason to suppose he did.

While her supper was preparing, the child fell into a refreshing sleep, from which they were obliged to rouse her when it was ready. As she evinced extraordinary uneasiness on learning that her grandfather was below stairs, and was greatly troubled at the thought of their being apart, he took his supper with her. Finding her still very restless on this head, they made him up a bed in an inner room, to which he presently retired. The key of this chamber happened by good fortune to be on that side of the door which was in Nell's room; she turned it on him when the landlady had withdrawn, and crept to bed again with a thankful heart.

The schoolmaster sat for a long time smoking his pipe by the kitchen fire, which was now deserted, thinking, with a very happy face, on the fortunate chance which had brought him so opportunely to the child's assistance, and parrying, as well as in his simple way he could, the inquisitive cross-examination of the landlady, who had a great curiosity to be made acquainted with every particular of Nell's life and history. The poor schoolmaster was so open-hearted, and so little versed in the most ordinary cunning or deceit, that she could not have failed to succeed in the first five minutes, but that he happened to be unacquainted with what she wished to know; and so he told her. The landlady, by no means satisfied with this assurance, which she considered an ingenious evasion of the question, rejoined that he had his reasons of course. Heaven forbid that she should wish to pry into the affairs of her customers, which indeed were no business of hers, who had so many of her own. She had merely asked a civil question, and to be sure she knew it would meet with a civil answer. She was quite satisfied—quite. She had rather perhaps that he would have said at once that he didn't choose to be communicative, because that would have been plain and intelligible. However, she had no right to be offended of course. He was the best judge, and had a perfect right to say what he pleased; nobody could dispute that, for a moment. Oh dear, no!

"I assure you, my good lady," said the mild schoolmaster, "that I have told you the plain truth—as I hope to be saved, I have told you the truth."

"Why then, I do believe you are in earnest," rejoined the landlady, with ready good-humour, "and I'm very sorry I have teased you. But curiosity you know is the curse of our sex, and that's the fact."

The landlord scratched his head, as if he thought the curse sometimes involved the other sex likewise; but he was prevented from making any remark to that effect, if he had it in contemplation to do so, by the schoolmaster's rejoinder.

"You should question me for half-a-dozen hours at a sitting, and welcome, and I would answer you patiently for the kindness of heart you have shown to-night, if I could," he said. "As it is, please to take care of her in the morning, and let me know early how she is; and to understand that I am pay-master for the three."

So, parting with them on most friendly terms, not the less cordial perhaps for this last direction, the schoolmaster went to his bed, and the host and hostess to theirs.

The report in the morning was, that the child was better, but was extremely weak, and would at least require a day's rest, and careful nursing, before she could proceed upon her journey. The schoolmaster received this communication with perfect cheerfulness, observing that he had a day to spare—two days for that matter—and could very well afford to wait. As the patient was to sit up in the evening, he appointed to visit her in her room at a certain hour, and rambling out with his book, did not return until the hour arrived.

Nell could not help weeping when they were left alone; whereat, and at sight of her pale face and wasted figure, the simple schoolmaster shed a few tears himself, at the same time showing in very energetic language how foolish it was to do so, and how very easily it could be avoided, if one tried.

"It makes me unhappy even in the midst of all this kindness," said the child, "to think that we should be a burden upon you. How can I ever thank you? If I had not met you so far from home, I must have died, and he would have been left alone."

"We'll not talk about dying," said the schoolmaster; "and as to burdens, I have made my fortune since you slept at my cottage."

"Indeed!" cried the child joyfully.

"Oh yes," returned her friend. "I have been appointed clerk and schoolmaster to a village a long way from here—and a long way from the old one as you may suppose—at five-and-thirty pounds a year. Five-and-thirty pounds!"

"I am very glad," said the child—"so very, very, glad."

"I am on my way there now," resumed the schoolmaster. "They allowed me the stage-coach-hire—outside stage-coach-hire all the way. Bless you, they grudge me nothing. But as the time at which I am expected there, left me ample leisure, I determined to walk instead. How glad I am, to think I did so!"

"How glad should we be!"

"Yes, yes," said the schoolmaster, moving restlessly in his chair, "certainly, that's very true. But you—where are you going, where are you coming from, what have you been doing since you left me, what had you been doing before? Now, tell me—do tell me. I know very little of the world, and perhaps you are better fitted to advise me in its affairs than I am qualified to give advice to you; but I am very sincere, and I have a reason (you have not forgotten it) for loving you. I have felt since that time as if my love for him who died, had been transferred to you who stood beside his bed. If this," he added, looking upwards, "is the beautiful creation that springs from ashes, let its peace prosper with me, as I deal tenderly and compassionately by this young child!"

The plain, frank kindness of the honest schoolmaster, the affectionate earnestness of his speech and manner, the truth which was stamped upon his every word and look, gave the child a confidence in him, which the utmost arts of treachery and dissimulation could never have awakened in her breast. She told him all—that they had no friend or relative—that she had fled with the old man, to save him from a madhouse and all the miseries he dreaded—that she was flying now, to save him from himself—and that she sought an asylum in some remote and primitive place, where the temptation before which he fell would never enter, and her late sorrows and distresses could have no place.

The schoolmaster heard her with astonishment. "This child!" he thought—"Has this child heroically persevered under all doubts and dangers, struggled with poverty and suffering, upheld and sustained by strong affection and the consciousness of rectitude alone! and yet the world is full of such heroism. Have I yet to learn that the hardest and best-borne trials are those which are never chronicled in any earthly record, and are suffered every day! And should I be surprised to hear the story of this child!"

What more he thought or said, matters not. It was concluded that Nell and her grandfather should accompany him to the village whither he was bound, and that he should endeavour to find them some humble occupation by which they could subsist. "We shall be sure to succeed," said the schoolmaster, heartily. "The cause is too good a one to fail."

They arranged to proceed on their journey next evening,—as a stage-wagon, which travelled for some distance on the same road as they must take, would stop at the inn to change horses, and the driver, for a small gratuity, would give Nell a place inside. A bargain was soon struck when the wagon came; and in due time it rolled away, with the child comfortably bestowed among the softer packages, her grandfather and the schoolmaster walking on beside the driver and the landlady and all the good folks of the inn screaming out their good wishes and farewells.

What a soothing, luxurious, drowsy way of travelling, to lie inside that slowly-moving mountain, listening to the tinkling of

the horses' bells, the occasional smacking of the carter's whip, the smooth rolling of the great broad wheels, the rattle of the harness, the cheery good-nights of passing travellers jogging past on little short-stepped horses—all made pleasantly indistinct by the thick awning, which seemed made for lazy listening under, till one fell asleep! The very going to sleep, still with an indistinct idea, as the head jogged to and fro upon the pillow, of moving onward with no trouble or fatigue, and hearing all these sounds like dreamy music, lulling to the senses — and the slow waking up, and finding one's self staring out through the breezy curtain, half-opened in the front, far up into the cold bright sky with its countless stars, and downward at the driver's lantern, dancing on like its namesake, Jack of the swamps and marshes, and sideways at the dark grim trees, and forward at the long bare road rising up, up, up, until it stopped abruptly at a sharp high ridge, as if there were no more road, and all beyond was sky — and the stopping at the inn to bait, and being helped out, and going into a room with fire and candles, and winking very much, and being agreeably reminded that the night was very cold, and anxious, for very comfort's sake, to think it colder than it was! — What a delicious journey was that journey in the wagon!

Then the going on again — so fresh at first, and shortly afterwards so sleepy. The waking from a sound nap as the mail came dashing past like a highway comet, with gleaming lamps and rattling hoofs, and visions of a guard behind, standing up to keep his feet warm, and of a gentleman in a fur cap opening his eyes and looking wild and stupified — the stopping at the turnpike where the man was gone to bed, and knocking at the door until he answered with a smothered shout from under the bedclothes in the little room above, where the faint light was burning, and presently came down, night-capped and shivering, to throw the gate wide open, and wish all wagons off the road except by day. The cold sharp interval between night and morning — the distant streak of light, widening and spreading, and turning from grey to white, and from white to yellow, and from yellow to burning red—the presence of day with all its cheerfulness and life—men and horses at the plough—birds in the trees and hedges, and boys in solitary fields, frightening them away with rattles. The coming to a town—people busy in the market; light carts and chaises round the tavern yard; tradesmen standing at their doors; men running horses up and down the street for sale; pigs plunging and grunting in the dirty distance, getting off with long strings at their legs, running into clean chemists' shops, and being dislodged with brooms by 'prentices; the night-coach changing horses—the passengers cheerless, cold, ugly, and discontented, with three months' growth of hair in one night—the coachman fresh as from a band-box, and exquisitely beautiful by contrast:—so much bustle, so many things in motion, and such a variety of incidents—when was there a journey with so many delights as that journey in the wagon!

Sometimes walking for a mile or two while her grandfather rode inside, and sometimes even prevailing upon the schoolmaster to take her place and lie down to rest, Nell travelled on very happily, until they came to a large town, where the wagon stopped, and where they spent a night. They passed a large church; and in the streets were a number of old houses, built of a kind of earth or plaster, crossed and re-crossed, in a great many directions, with black beams, which gave them a remarkable and very ancient look. The doors, too, were arched and low, some with oaken portals and quaint benches, where the former inhabitants had sat on summer evenings. The windows were latticed in little diamond panes, that seemed to wink and blink upon the passengers, as if they were dim of sight. They had long since got clear of the smoke and furnaces, except in one or two solitary instances, where a factory, planted among fields, withered the space about it, like a burning mountain. When they had passed through this town, they entered again upon the country, and began to draw near their place of destination.

It was not so near, however, but that they spent another night upon the road; not that their doing so was quite an act of necessity, but that the schoolmaster, when they approached within a few miles of his village, had a fidgety sense of his dignity as the new clerk, and was unwilling to make his entry in dusty shoes, and travel-disordered dress. It was a fine, clear, autumn morning, when they came upon the scene of his promotion, and stopped to contemplate its beauties.

"See — here's the church!" cried the delighted schoolmaster, in a low voice; "and that old building close beside it, is the school-house, I'll be sworn. Five-and-thirty pounds a year in this beautiful place!"

They admired everything—the old grey porch, the mullioned windows, the venerable grave-stones dotting the green churchyard, the ancient tower, the very weather-cock; the brown thatched roofs of cottage, barn, and homestead, peeping from among

the trees; the stream that rippled by the distant watermill; the blue Welsh mountains far away. It was for such a spot the child had wearied in the dense, dark, miserable haunts of labour. Upon her bed of ashes, and amidst the squalid horrors through which they had forced their way, visions of such scenes—beautiful indeed, but not more beautiful than this sweet reality—had been always present to her mind. They had seemed to melt into a dim and airy distance, as the prospect of ever beholding them again grew fainter; but, as they receded, she had loved and panted for them more.

"I must leave you somewhere for a few minutes," said the schoolmaster, at length breaking the silence into which they had fallen in their gladness. "I have a letter to present, and inquiries to make, you know. Where shall I take you? To the little inn yonder?"

"Let us wait here," rejoined Nell. "The gate is open. We will sit in the church porch till you come back."

"A good place too," said the schoolmaster, leading the way towards it, disencumbering himself of his portmanteau, and placing it on the stone seat. "Be sure that I come back with good news, and am not long gone."

So, the happy schoolmaster put on a bran-new pair of gloves which he had carried in a little parcel in his pocket all the way, and hurried off, full of ardour and excitement.

The child watched him from the porch until the intervening foliage hid him from her view, and then stepped softly out into the old church-yard—so solemn and quiet, that every rustle of her dress upon the fallen leaves, which strewed the path and made her footsteps noiseless, seemed an invasion of its silence. It was a very aged, ghostly place: the church had been built many hundreds of years ago, and had once had a convent or monastery attached; for arches in ruins, remains of oriel windows, and fragments of blackened walls, were yet standing; while other portions of the old building, which had crumbled away and fallen down, were mingled with the church-yard earth and overgrown with grass, as if they too claimed a burying-place and sought to mix their ashes with the dust of men. Hard by these gravestones of dead years, and forming a part of the ruin which some pains had been taken to render habitable in modern times, were two small dwellings with sunken windows and oaken doors, fast hastening to decay, empty and desolate.

Upon these tenements, the attention of the child became exclusively riveted. She knew not why. The church, the ruin, the

antiquated graves, had equal claims at least upon a stranger's thoughts, but from the moment when her eyes first rested on these two dwellings, she could turn to nothing else. Even when she had made the circuit of the inclosure, and, returning to the porch, sat pensively waiting for their friend, she took her station where she could still look upon them, and felt as if fascinated towards that spot.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-SEVENTH.

Kit's mother and the single gentleman—upon whose track it is expedient to follow with hurried steps, lest this history should be chargeable with inconstancy, and the offence of leaving its characters in situations of uncertainty and doubt—Kit's mother and the single gentleman, speeding onward in the post-chaise-and-four whose departure from the Notary's door we have already witnessed, soon left the town behind them, and struck fire from the flints of the broad highway.

The good woman, being not a little embarrassed by the novelty of her situation, and certain maternal apprehensions that perhaps by this time little Jacob, or the baby, or both, had fallen into the fire, or tumbled down stairs, or had been squeezed behind doors, or had scalded their windpipes in endeavouring to allay their thirst at the spouts of tea-kettles, preserved an uneasy silence; and meeting from the window the eyes of turnpike-men, omnibus-drivers, and others, felt in the new dignity of her position like a mourner at a funeral, who, not being greatly afflicted by the loss of the departed, recognises his every-day acquaintance from the window of the mourning-coach, but is constrained to preserve a decent solemnity, and the appearance of being indifferent to all external objects.

To have been indifferent to the companionship of the single gentleman would have been tantamount to being gifted with nerves of steel. Never did chaise inclose, or horses draw, such a restless gentleman as he. He never sat in the same position for two minutes together, but was perpetually tossing his arms and legs about, pulling up the sashes and letting them violently down, or thrusting his head out of one window to draw it in again and thrust it out of another. He carried in his pocket, too, a fire-box of mysterious and unknown construction; and as sure as ever Kit's mother closed her eyes, so surely—whisk, rattle, fizz—there was the single gentleman consulting his watch by a flame of fire, and letting the sparks fall down among the straw as if there were no such thing as a possibility of himself and Kit's mother being roasted alive before the boys could stop their horses. Whenever they halted to change, there he was — out of the carriage without letting down the steps, bursting about the inn yard like a lighted cracker, pulling out his watch by lamplight and forgetting to look at it before he put it up again, and in short committing so many extravagancies that Kit's mother was quite afraid of him. Then, when the horses were to, in he came like a Harlequin, and before they had gone a mile, out came the watch and the fire-box together, and Kit's mother was wide awake again, with no hope of a wink of sleep for that stage.

"Are you comfortable?" the single gentleman would say after one of these exploits, turning sharply round.

"Quite, sir, thank you."

"Are you sure? An't you cold?"

"It is a little chilly, sir," Kit's mother would reply.

"I knew it!" cried the single gentleman, letting down one of the front glasses. "She wants some brandy and water! Of course she does. How could I forget it? Hallo! Stop at the next inn, and call out for a glass of hot brandy and water."

It was in vain for Kit's mother to protest that she stood in need of nothing of the kind. The single gentleman was inexorable; and whenever he had exhausted all other modes and fashions of restlessness, it invariably occurred to him that Kit's mother wanted brandy and water.

In this way they travelled on until near midnight, when they stopped to supper, for which meal the single gentleman ordered everything eatable that the house contained; and because Kit's mother didn't eat everything at once, and eat it all, he took it into his head that she must be ill.

"You're faint," said the single gentleman, who did nothing himself but walk about the room. "I see what's the matter with you, ma'am. You're faint."

"Thank you, sir, I'm not indeed."

"I know you are. I'm sure of it. I drag this poor woman from the bosom of her family at a minute's notice, and she

goes on getting fainter and fainter before my eyes. I'm a pretty fellow! How many children have you got, ma'am?"

"Two, sir, besides Kit."

"Boys, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are they christened?"

"Only half baptised as yet, sir."

"I'm godfather to both of 'em. Remember that, if you please, ma'am. You had better have some mulled wine."

"I couldn't touch a drop, indeed, sir."

"You must," said the single gentleman. "I see you want it. I ought to have thought of it before."

Immediately flying to the bell, and calling for mulled wine as impetuously as if it had been wanted for instant use in the recovery of some person apparently drowned, the single gentleman made Kit's mother swallow a bumper of it at such a high temperature that the tears ran down her face, and then bustled her off to the chaise again, where—not impossibly from the effects of this agreeable sedative—she soon became insensible to his restlessness, and fell fast asleep. Nor were the happy effects of this prescription of a transitory nature, as, notwithstanding that the distance was greater, and the journey longer, than the single gentleman had anticipated, she did not awake until it was broad day, and they were clattering over the pavement of a town.

"This is the place!" cried her companion, letting down all the glasses. "Drive to the wax-work!"

The boy on the wheeler touched his hat, and setting spurs to his horse, to the end that they might go in brilliantly, all four broke into a smart canter, and dashed through the streets with a noise that brought the good folks wondering to their doors and windows, and drowned the sober voices of the town-clocks as they chimed out half-past eight. They drove up to a door round which a crowd of persons were collected, and there stopped.

"What's this!" said the single gentleman thrusting out his head. "Is anything the matter here?"

"A wedding sir, a wedding!" cried several voices. "Hurrah!"

The single gentleman, rather bewildered by finding himself the centre of this noisy throng, alighted with the assistance of one of the postilions, and handed out Kit's mother, at sight of whom the populace cried out, "Here's another wedding!" and roared and leaped for joy.

"The world has gone mad, I think," said the single gentleman, pressing through the concourse with his supposed bride. "Stand back here, will you, and let me knock."

Anything that makes a noise is satisfactory to a crowd. A score of dirty hands were raised directly to knock for him, and seldom has a knocker of equal powers been made to produce more deafening sounds than this particular engine on the occasion in question. Having rendered these voluntary services, the throng modestly retired a little, preferring that the single gentleman should bear their consequences alone.

"Now sir, what do you want?" said a man with a large white bow at his button-hole, opening the door, and confronting him with a very stoical aspect.

"Who has been married here, my friend?" said the single gentleman.

"I have."

"You! and to whom in the devil's name?"

"What right have you to ask?" returned the bridegroom, eyeing him from top to toe.

"What right!" cried the single gentleman, drawing the arm of Kit's mother more tightly through his own, for that good woman evidently had it in contemplation to run away. "A right you little dream of. Mind, good people, if this fellow has been marrying a minor—tut, tut, that can't be. Where is the child you have here, my good fellow? You call her Nell. Where is she?"

As he propounded this question, which Kit's mother echoed, somebody in a room near at hand, uttered a great shriek, and a stout lady in a white dress came running to the door, and supported herself upon the bridegroom's arm.

"Where is she?" cried this lady. "What news have you brought me? What has become of her?"

The single gentleman started back, and gazed upon the face of the late Mrs. Jarley (that morning wedded to the philosophic George, to the eternal wrath and despair of Mr. Slum the poet), with looks of conflicting apprehension, disappointment, and incredulity. At length he stammered out,

"I ask *you* where she is? What do you mean?"

"Oh sir!" cried the bride, "if you have come here to do her any good, why weren't you here a week ago?"

"She is not—not dead?" said the person to whom she addressed herself, turning very pale.

"No, not so bad as that."

"I thank God," cried the single gentleman feebly. "Let me come in."

They drew back to admit him, and when he had entered, closed the door.

"You see in me, good people," he said, turning to the newly-married couple, "one to whom life itself is not dearer than the two persons whom I seek. They would

not know me. My features are strange to them, but if they or either of them are here, take this good woman with you, and let them see her first, for her they both know. If you deny them from any mistaken regard or fear for them, judge of my intentions by their recognition of this person as their old humble friend."

"I always said it!" cried the bride, "I knew she was not a common child! Alas, sir! we have no power to help you, for all that we could do, has been tried in vain."

With that, they related to him without disguise or concealment, all that they knew of Nell and her grandfather, from their first meeting with them, down to the time of their sudden disappearance; adding (which was quite true) that they had made every possible effort to trace them, but without success; having been at first in great alarm for their safety, as well as on account of the suspicions to which they themselves might one day be exposed in consequence of their abrupt departure. They dwelt upon the old man's imbecility of mind, upon the uneasiness the child had always testified when he was absent, upon the company he had been supposed to keep, and upon the increased depression which had gradually crept over her and changed her both in health and spirits. Whether she had missed the old man in the night, and, knowing or conjecturing whither he had bent his steps, had gone in pursuit, or whether they had left the house together, they had no means of determining. Certain they considered it, that there was but slender prospect left of hearing of them again, and that whether their flight originated with the old man, or with the child, there was now no hope of their return.

To all this, the single gentleman listened with the air of a man quite borne down by grief and disappointment. He shed tears when they spoke of the grandfather, and appeared in deep affliction.

Not to protract this portion of our narrative, and to make short work of a long story, let it be briefly written that before the interview came to a close, the single gentleman deemed he had sufficient evidence of having been told the truth, and that he endeavoured to force upon the bride and bridegroom an acknowledgment of their kindness to the unfriended child, which, however, they steadily declined accepting. In the end, the happy couple jolted away in the caravan to spend their honeymoon in a country excursion; and the single gentleman and Kit's mother stood ruefully before their carriage-door.

"Where shall we drive you, sir?" said the post-boy.

"You may drive me," said the single gentleman, "to the—" He was not going to add "inn," but he added it for the sake of Kit's mother; and to the inn they went.

Rumours had already got abroad that the little girl who used to show the wax-work, was the child of great people, who had been stolen from her parents in infancy, and had only just been traced. Opinion was divided whether she was the daughter of a prince, a duke, an earl, a viscount, or a baron, but all agreed upon the main fact, and that the single gentleman was her father; and all bent forward to catch a glimpse, though it were only of the tip of his noble nose, as he rode away, desponding, in his four-horse chaise.

What would he have given to know, and what sorrow would have been saved if he had only known, that at that moment both child and grandfather were seated in the old church porch, patiently awaiting the schoolmaster's return!

CHAPTER THE FORTY-EIGHTH.

Popular rumour concerning the single gentleman and his errand, travelling from mouth to mouth, and waxing stronger in the marvellous as it was bandied about—for your popular rumour, unlike the rolling stone of the proverb, is one which gathers a deal of moss in its wanderings up and down,—occasioned his dismounting at the inn-door to be looked upon as an exciting and attractive spectacle, which could scarcely be enough admired; and drew together a large concourse of idlers, who, having recently been, as it were, thrown out of employment by the closing of the wax-work and the completion of the nuptial ceremonies, considered his arrival as little else than a special providence, and hailed it with demonstrations of the liveliest joy.

Not at all participating in the general sensation, but wearing the depressed and wearied look of one who sought to meditate on his disappointment in silence and privacy, the single gentleman alighted, and handed out Kit's mother with a gloomy politeness which impressed the lookers-on

extremely. That done, he gave her his arm and escorted her into the house, while several active waiters ran on before as a skirmishing party, to clear the way and to show the room which was ready for their reception.

"Any room will do," said the single gentleman. "Let it be near at hand, that's all."

"Close here, sir, if you please to walk this way."

"Would the gentleman like this room?" said a voice, as a little out-of-the-way door at the foot of the well staircase flew briskly open and a head popped out. "He's quite welcome to it. He's as welcome as flowers in May, or coals at Christmas. *Would* you like this room, sir? Honour me by walking in. Do me the favour, pray."

"Goodness gracious me!" cried Kit's mother, falling back in extreme surprise; "only think of this!"

She had some reason to be astonished for the person who proffered the gracious invitation was no other than Daniel Quilp. The little door out of which he had thrust his head was close to the inn larder; and there he stood, bowing with grotesque

politeness; as much at his ease as if the door were that of his own house; blighting all the legs of mutton and cold roast fowls by his close companionship, and looking like the evil genius of the cellars come from under-ground upon some work of mischief.

"Would you do me the honour?" said Quilp.

"I prefer being alone," replied the single gentleman.

"Oh!" said Quilp. And with that, he darted in again with one jerk, and clapped the little door to, like a figure in a Dutch clock when the hour strikes.

"Why it was only last night, sir," whispered Kit's mother, "that I left him in Little Bethel."

"Indeed!" said her fellow-passenger. "When did that person come here, waiter?"

"Come down by the night-coach this morning, sir."

"Humph! And when is he going?"

"Can't say, sir, really. When the chambermaid asked him just now if he should want a bed, sir, he first made faces at her, and then wanted to kiss her."

"Beg him to walk this way," said the single gentleman. "I should be glad to exchange a word with him, tell him. Beg him to come at once, do you hear?"

The man stared on receiving these instructions; for the single gentleman had not only displayed as much astonishment as Kit's mother at sight of the dwarf, but, standing in no fear of him, had been at less pains to conceal his dislike and repugnance. He departed on his errand, however, and immediately returned, ushering in its object.

"Your servant, sir," said the dwarf. "I encountered your messenger half-way. I thought you'd allow me to pay my compliments to you. I hope you're well. I hope you're very well."

There was a short pause, while the dwarf, with half-shut eyes and puckered face, stood waiting for an answer. Receiving none, he turned towards his more familiar acquaintance.

"Christopher's mother!" he cried. "Such a dear lady, such a worthy woman, so blest in her honest son! How is Christopher's mother? Has change of air and scene improved her? Her little family, too, and Christopher? Do they thrive? Do they flourish? Are they growing into worthy citizens, eh?"

Making his voice ascend in the scale with every succeeding question, Mr. Quilp finished in a shrill squeak, and subsided into the panting look which was customary with him, and which, whether it were assumed or natural, had equally the effect of banishing all expression from his face, and rendering it, as far as it afforded any index to his mood or meaning, a perfect blank.

"Mr. Quilp," said the single gentleman.

The dwarf put his hand to his great flapped ear, and counterfeited the closest attention.

"We two have met before—"

"Surely," cried Quilp, nodding his head. "Oh, surely, sir. Such an honour and pleasure — it's both, Christopher's mother, it's both—is not to be forgotten so soon. By no means."

"You may remember that the day I arrived in London, and found the house to which I drove, empty and deserted, I was directed by some of the neighbours to you, and waited upon you without stopping for rest or refreshment!"

"How precipitate that was, and yet what an earnest and vigorous measure!" said Quilp, conferring with himself, in imitation of his friend, Mr. Sampson Brass.

"I found," said the single gentleman, "you, in possession of everything that had so recently belonged to another man, and that other man, who, up to the time of your entering upon his property, had been looked upon as affluent, reduced to sudden beggary, and driven from house and home."

"We had warrant for what we did, my good sir," rejoined Quilp, "we had our warrant. Don't say driven, either. He went of his own accord—vanished in the night, sir."

"No matter," said the single gentleman, angrily. "He was gone."

"Yes, he was gone," said Quilp, with the same exasperating composure. "No doubt he was gone. The only question was, where. And it's a question still."

"Now, what am I to think," said the single gentleman, sternly regarding him, "of you, who, plainly indisposed to give me any information then — nay, obviously holding back, and sheltering yourself with all kinds of cunning, trickery, and evasion, —are dogging my footsteps now?"

"I dogging!" cried Quilp.

"Why, are you not?" returned his questioner, fretted into a state of the utmost irritation. "Were you not, a few hours since, sixty miles off, and in the chapel to which this good woman goes to say her prayers?"

"She was there, too, I think," said Quilp, still perfectly unmoved. "I might say, if I was inclined to be rude, how do I know but you have been dogging *my* footsteps. Yes, I was at chapel. What then? I've read in books that pilgrims

were used to go to chapel before they went on journeys, to pass up petitions for their safe return. Wise men! journeys are very perilous—especially outside the coach. Wheels come off, horses take fright, coachmen drive too fast, coaches overturn. I always go to chapel before I start on journeys. It's the last thing I can do on such occasions, indeed."

That Quilp lied most heartily in this speech, it needed no very great penetration to discover, although for anything that he suffered to appear in his face, voice, or manner, he might have been clinging to truth with the quiet constancy of a martyr.

"In the name of all that's calculated to drive one crazy, man," said the unfortunate single gentleman, "have you not, for some reason of your own, taken upon yourself my errand? don't you know with what object I have come here, and if you do know, can you throw no light upon it?"

"You think I'm a conjurer, sir," replied Quilp, shrugging up his shoulders. "If I was, I should tell my own fortune—and make it."

"Ah! we have said all we need say, I see," returned the other, throwing himself impatiently upon a sofa. "Pray, leave us, if you please."

"Willingly, returned Quilp. "Most willingly. Christopher's mother, my good soul, farewell. A pleasant journey—*back*, sir. Ahem!"

With these parting words, and a grin upon his features altogether indescribable, but which seemed to be compounded of every monstrous grimace of which men or monkeys are capable, the dwarf slowly retreated, and closed the door behind him.

"Oho!" he said when he had regained his own room, and sat himself down in a chair with his arms akimbo. "Oho! are you there, my friend! In-deed!"

Chuckling as though in very great glee, and recompensing himself for the constraint he had lately put on his countenance by twisting it into all imaginable varieties of ugliness, Mr. Quilp, rocking himself to and fro in his chair, and nursing his left leg at the same time, fell into certain meditations, of which it may be necessary to relate the substance.

First, he reviewed the circumstances which had led to his repairing to that spot, which were briefly these. Dropping in at Mr. Sampson Brass's office on the previous evening, in the absence of that gentleman and his learned sister, he had lighted upon Mr. Swiveller, who chanced at the moment to be sprinkling a glass of warm gin and water on the dust of the law, and to be moistening his clay, as the phrase goes, rather copiously. But as clay, in the abstract, when too much moistened, becomes of a weak and uncertain consistency, breaking down in unexpected places, retaining impressions but faintly, and preserving no strength or steadiness of character, so Mr. Swiveller's clay, having imbibed a considerable quantity of moisture, was in a very loose and slippery state, insomuch that the various ideas impressed upon it were fast losing their distinctive character, and running into each other. It is not uncommon for human clay in this condition to value itself above all things on its great prudence and sagacity; and Mr. Swiveller, especially prizing himself upon these qualities, took occasion to remark that he had made strange discoveries in connexion with the single gentleman who lodged above, which he had determined to keep within his own bosom, and which neither tortures nor cajolery should ever induce him to reveal. Of this determination Mr. Quilp expressed his high approval, and setting himself in the same breath to goad Mr. Swiveller on to further hints, soon made out that the single gentleman had been seen in communication with Kit, and that this was the secret which was never to be disclosed.

Possessed of this piece of information, Mr. Quilp directly supposed that the single gentleman above stairs must be the same individual who had waited on him; and having assured himself by further inquiries that this surmise was correct, had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the intent and object of his correspondence with Kit was the recovery of his old client and the child. Burning with curiosity to know what proceedings were afoot, he resolved to pounce upon Kit's mother as the person least able to resist his arts, and consequently the most likely to be entrapped into such revelations as he sought; so, taking an abrupt leave of Mr. Swiveller, he hurried to her house. The good woman being from home, he made inquiries of a neighbour, as Kit himself did soon afterwards, and being directed to the chapel, betook himself there, in order to waylay her, at the conclusion of the service.

He had not sat in the chapel more than a quarter of an hour, and with his eyes piously fixed upon the ceiling, was chuckling inwardly over the joke of his being there at all, when Kit himself appeared. Watchful as a lynx, one glance showed the dwarf that he had come on business. Absorbed in appearance, as we have seen, and feigning a profound abstraction, he noted every circumstance of his behaviour, and when he withdrew with his family, shot

out after him. In fine, he traced them to the notary's house; learnt the destination of the carriage from one of the postilions; and knowing that a fast night-coach started for the same place, at the very hour which was on the point of striking, from a street hard by, darted round to the coach-office without more ado, and took his seat upon the roof. After passing and repassing the carriage on the road, and being passed and repassed by it sundry times in the course of the night, according as their stoppages were longer or shorter, or their rate of travelling varied, they reached the town almost together. Quilp kept the chaise in sight, mingled with the crowd, learnt the single gentleman's errand, and its failure; and having possessed himself of all that it was material to know, hurried off, reached the inn before him, had the interview just now detailed, and shut himself up in the little room in which he hastily reviewed all these occurrences.

"You are there, are you, my friend?" he repeated, greedily biting his nails. "I am suspected and thrown aside, and Kit's the confidential agent, is he? I shall have to dispose of him, I fear. If we had come up with them this morning," he continued, after a thoughtful pause, "I was ready to prove a pretty good claim. I could have made my profit. But for these canting hypocrites, the lad and his mother, I could get this fiery gentleman as comfortably into my net as our old friend—our mutual friend, ha! ha!—and chubby, rosy Nell. At the worst, it's a golden opportunity, not to be lost. Let us find them first, and I'll find means of draining you of some of your superfluous cash, sir, while there are prison bars, and bolts, and locks, to keep your friend or kinsman safely. I hate your virtuous people!" said the dwarf, throwing off a bumper of brandy, and smacking his lips; "ah! I hate 'em every one!"

This was not a mere empty vaunt, but a deliberate avowal of his real sentiments; for Mr. Quilp, who loved nobody, had by little and little come to hate everybody nearly or remotely connected with his ruined client:—the old man himself, because he had been able to deceive him and elude his vigilance;—the child, because she was the object of Mrs. Quilp's commiseration and constant self-reproach;—the single gentleman, because of his unconcealed aversion to himself;—Kit and his mother, most mortally, for the reasons already shown. Above and beyond that general feeling of opposition to them, which would have been inseparable from his ravenous desire to enrich himself by these altered circumstances, Daniel Quilp hated them every one.

In this amiable mood, Mr. Quilp enlivened himself and his hatreds with more brandy, and then, changing his quarters, withdrew to an obscure alehouse, under cover of which seclusion he instituted all possible inquiries that might lead to the discovery of the old man and his grandchild. But all was in vain. Not the slightest trace or clue could be obtained. They had left the town by night; no one had seen them go; no one had met them on the road; the driver of no coach, cart, or wagon, had seen any travellers answering their description; nobody had fallen in with them, or heard of them. Convinced at last that for the present all such attempts were hopeless, he appointed two or three scouts, with promises of large rewards in case of their forwarding him any intelligence, and returned to London by next day's coach.

It was some gratification to Mr. Quilp to find, as he took his place upon the roof, that Kit's mother was alone inside; from which circumstance he derived, in the course of the journey, much cheerfulness of spirit, inasmuch as her solitary condition enabled him to terrify her with many extraordinary annoyances; such as hanging over the side of the coach at the risk of his life, and staring in with his great goggle eyes, which seemed in hers the more horrible from his face being upside down; dodging her in this way from one window to another; getting nimbly down whenever they changed horses, and thrusting his head in at the window with a dismal squint: which ingenious tortures had such an effect upon Mrs. Nubbles, that she was quite unable for the time to resist the belief that Mr. Quilp did in his own person represent and embody that Evil Power, who was so vigorously attacked at Little Bethel, and who, by reason of her backslidings in respect of Astley's and oysters, was now frolicksome and rampant.

Kit, having been apprised by letter of his mother's intended return, was waiting for her at the coach-office; and great was his surprise when he saw, leering over the coachman's shoulder like some familiar demon invisible to all eyes but his, the well-known face of Quilp.

"How are you, Christopher?" croaked the dwarf from the coach-top. "All right Christopher. Mother's inside."

"Why, how did he come here, mother?" whispered Kit.

"I don't know how he came or why my dear," rejoined Mrs. Nubbles, dismount-

ing with her son's assistance, "but he has been a terrifying of me out of my seven senses all this blessed day."

"He has!" cried Kit.

"You wouldn't believe it, that you wouldn't," replied his mother; "but don't say a word to him, for I really don't believe he's human. Hush! Don't turn round as if I was talking of him, but he's a squinting at me now in the full blaze of the coach-lamp, quite awful!"

In spite of his mother's injunction, Kit turned sharply round to look. Mr. Quilp was serenely gazing at the stars, quite absorbed in celestial contemplation.

"Oh, he's the artfullest creetur!" cried Mrs. Nubbles. "But come away. Don't speak to him for the world."

"Yes I will, mother. What nonsense. I say, sir—"

Mr. Quilp affected to start, and looked smilingly round.

"You let my mother alone, will you?" said Kit. "How dare you tease a poor lone woman like her, making her miserable and melancholy as if she hadn't got enough to make her so, without you. An't you ashamed of yourself, you little monster?"

"Monster!" said Quilp inwardly, with a smile. "Ugliest dwarf that could be seen anywhere for a penny — monster — ah!"

"You show her any of your impudence again," resumed Kit, shouldering the band-box, "and I tell you what, Mr. Quilp, I won't bear with you any more. You have no right to do it; I'm sure we never interfered with you. This isn't the first time; and if ever you worry or frighten her again, you'll oblige me (though I should be very sorry to do it, on account of your size) to beat you."

Quilp said not a word in reply, but walking up so close to Kit as to bring his eyes within two or three inches of his face, looked fixedly at him, retreated a little distance without averting his gaze, approached again, again withdrew, and so on for half-a-dozen times, like a head in a phantasmagoria. Kit stood his ground as if in expectation of an immediate assault, but finding that nothing came of these gestures, snapped his fingers and walked away; his mother dragging him off as fast as she could, and, even in the midst of his news of little Jacob and the baby, looking anxiously over her shoulder to see if Quilp were following.

CHAPTER THE FORTY-NINTH.

Kit's mother might have spared herself the trouble of looking back so often, for nothing was further from Mr. Quilp's thoughts than any intention of pursuing her and her son, or renewing the quarrel with which they had parted. He went his way, whistling from time to time some fragments of a tune; and with a face quite tranquil and composed, jogged pleasantly towards home; entertaining himself as he went with visions of the fears and terrors of Mrs. Quilp, who, having received no intelligence of him for three whole days and two nights, and having had no previous notice of his absence, was doubtless by that time in a state of distraction, and constantly fainting away with anxiety and grief.

This facetious probability was so congenial to the dwarf's humour, and so exquisitely amusing to him, that he laughed as he went along until the tears ran down his cheeks; and more than once, when he found himself in a by-street, vented his delight in a shrill scream, which greatly terrifying any lonely passenger, who happened to be walking on before him expecting nothing so little, increased his mirth, and made him remarkably cheerful and light-hearted.

In this happy flow of spirits Mr. Quilp reached Tower Hill, when, gazing up at the window of his own sitting-room, he thought he descried more light than is usual in a house of mourning. Drawing nearer, and listening attentively, he could hear several voices in earnest conversation, among which he could distinguish, not only those of his wife and mother-in-law, but the tongues of men.

"Ha!" cried the jealous dwarf, "What's this! Do they entertain such visitors while I'm away!"

A smothered cough from above, was the reply. He felt in his pockets for his latch-key, but had forgotten it. There was no resource but to knock at the door.

"A light in the passage," said Quilp, peeping through the key-hole. "A very soft knock; and, by your leave my lady

I may yet steal upon you unawares. So-ho!"

A very low and gentle rap, received no answer from within. But after a second application to the knocker, no louder than the first, the door was softly opened by the boy from the wharf, whom Quilp instantly gagged with one hand, and dragged into the street with the other.

"You'll throttle me, master," whispered the boy. "Let go, will you?"

"Who's up-stairs, you dog?" retorted Quilp in the same tone. "Tell me. And don't speak above your breath, or I'll choke you in good earnest."

The boy could only point to the window, and reply with a stifled giggle, expressive of such intense enjoyment, that Quilp clutched him by the throat again and might have carried his threat into execution, or at least have made very good progress towards that end, but for the boy's nimbly extricating himself from his grasp, and fortifying himself behind the nearest post, when, after some fruitless attempts to catch him by the hair of his head, his master was obliged to come to a parley.

"Will you answer me?" said Quilp. "What's going on, above?"

"You won't let one speak," replied the boy. "They—ha ha ha!—they think you're—you're dead. Ha ha ha!"

"Dead!" cried Quilp, relaxing into a grim laugh himself. "No. Do they? Do they really, you dog?"

"They think you're—you're drowned," replied the boy, who in his malicious nature had a strong infusion of his master. "You was last seen on the brink of the wharf, and they think you tumbled over. Ha ha!"

The prospect of playing the spy under such delicious circumstances, and of disappointing them all by walking in alive, gave more delight to Quilp than the greatest stroke of good fortune could possibly have inspired him with. He was no less tickled than his hopeful assistant, and they both stood for some seconds, grinning and gasping, and wagging their heads at each other, on either side of the post, like an unmatchable pair of Chinese idols.

"Not a word," said Quilp, making towards the door on tiptoe. "Not a sound, not so much as a creaking board, or a stumble against a cobweb. Drowned, eh, Mrs. Quilp? Drowned?"

So saying, he blew out the candle, kicked off his shoes, and groped his way up stairs; leaving his delighted young friend in an ecstasy of summersets on the pavement.

The bedroom-door on the staircase being unlocked, Mr. Quilp slipped in, and planted himself behind the door of communication between that chamber and the sitting-room, which standing ajar to render both more airy, and having a very convenient chink (of which he had often availed himself for purposes of espial, and had indeed enlarged with his pocket-knife), enabled him not only to hear, but to see distinctly, what was passing.

GILBERT Sc.

Applying his eye to this convenient place, he descried Mr. Brass seated at the table, with pen, ink, and paper, and the case-bottle of rum — his own case-bottle, and his own particular Jamaica—convenient to his hand; with hot water, fragrant lemons, white lump sugar, and all things fitting; from which choice materials, Sampson, by no means insensible to their claims upon his attention, had compounded a mighty glass of punch reeking hot; which he was at that very moment stirring up with a teaspoon, and contemplating with looks in which a faint assumption of sentimental regret, struggled but weakly with a bland and comfortable joy. At the same table, with both her elbows upon it, was Mrs. Jiniwin; no longer sipping other people's punch feloniously with teaspoons, but taking deep draughts from a jorum of her own; while her daughter—not exactly with ashes on her head, or sackcloth on her back, but preserving a very decent and becoming appearance of sorrow nevertheless — was reclining in an easy-chair, and soothing her grief with a smaller allowance of the same glib liquid. There were also present, a couple of water-side men, bearing between them certain machines called drags; even these fellows were accommodated with a stiff glass apiece; and as they drank with a great relish, and were naturally of a red-nosed, pimple-faced, convivial look, their presence rather increased than detracted from that decided appearance of comfort, which was the great characteristic of the party.

"If I could poison that dear old lady's rum and water," murmured Quilp, "I'd die happy."

"Ah!" said Mr. Brass, breaking the silence, and raising his eyes to the ceiling with a sigh, "Who knows but he may be looking down upon us now! Who knows but he may be surveying of us from—from somewheres or another, and contemplating us with a watchful eye! Oh Lor!"

Here Mr. Brass stopped to drink half his punch, and then resumed; looking at the other half, as he spoke, with a dejected smile.

"I can almost fancy," said the lawyer shaking his head, "that I see his eye glistening down at the very bottom of my liquor. When shall we look upon his like again? Never, never! One minute we are here,"—holding his tumbler before his eyes—"the next we are there,"—gulping down its contents, and striking himself emphatically a little below the chest—"in the silent tomb. To think that I should be drinking his very rum! It seems like a dream."

With the view, no doubt, of testing the reality of his position, Mr. Brass pushed his tumbler as he spoke towards Mrs. Jiniwin, for the purpose of being replenished; and turned towards the attendant mariners.

"The search has been quite unsuccessful then?"

"Quite, master. But I should say that if he turns up anywhere, he'll come ashore somewhere about Grinidge to-morrow, at ebb tide, eh, mate?"

The other gentleman assented, observing that he was expected at the Hospital, and that several pensioners would be ready to receive him whenever he arrived.

"Then we have nothing for it but resignation," said Mr. Brass; "nothing but resignation and expectation. It would be a comfort to have his body; it would be a dreary comfort."

"Oh, beyond a doubt, assented Mrs. Jiniwin, hastily; "if we once had that, we should be quite sure."

"With regard to the descriptive advertisement," said Sampson Brass, taking up his pen. "It is a melancholy pleasure to recall his traits. Respecting his legs, now——?"

"Crooked, certainly," said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Do you think they *were* crooked?" said Brass, in an insinuating tone. "I think I see them now coming up the street, very wide apart, in nankeen pantaloons, a little shrunk, and without straps. Ah! what a vale of tears we live in! Do we say crooked?"

"I think they were a little so," observed Mrs. Quilp, with a sob.

"Legs crooked," said Brass, writing as he spoke. "Large head, short body, legs crooked"—

"Very crooked," suggested Mrs. Jiniwin.

"We'll not say very crooked, ma'am," said Brass, piously. "Let us not bear hard upon the weaknesses of the deceased. He is gone, ma'am, to where his legs will never come in question.—We will content ourselves with crooked, Mrs. Jiniwin."

"I thought you wanted the truth," said the old lady. "That's all."

"Bless your eyes, how I love you!" muttered Quilp. "There she goes again. No thing but punch!"

"This is an occupation," said the law yer, laying down his pen and emptying his glass, "which seems to bring him before my eyes like the Ghost of Hamlet's father, in the very clothes that he wore on work-a-days. His coat, his waistcoat, his shoes and stockings, his trousers, his hat, his wit and humour, his pathos and his umbrella, all come before me like visions of my youth. His linen!" said Mr. Brass, smiling

fondly at the wall, "his linen, which was always of a particular colour, for such was his whim and fancy—how plain I see his linen now!"

"You had better go on, sir," said Mrs. Jiniwin, impatiently.

"True, ma'am, true," cried Mr. Brass. "Our faculties must not freeze with grief. I'll trouble you for a little more of that, ma'am. A question now arises, with relation to his nose."

"Flat," said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Aquiline!" cried Quilp, thrusting in his head, and striking the feature with his fist. "Aquiline, you hag. Do you see it? Do you call this flat? Do you? Eh?"

"Oh, capital, capital!" shouted Brass, from the mere force of habit. "Excellent! How very good he is! He's a most remarkable man—so extremely whimsical! Such an amazing power of taking people by surprise!"

Quilp paid no regard whatever to these compliments, nor to the dubious and frightened look into which the lawyer gradually subsided, nor to the shrieks of his wife and mother-in-law, nor to the latter's running from the room, nor to the former's fainting away. Keeping his eye fixed on Sampson Brass, he walked up to the table, and, beginning with his glass, drank off the contents, and went regularly round until he had emptied the other two, when he seized the case-bottle, and hugging it under his arm, surveyed him with a most extraordinary leer.

"Not yet, Sampson," said Quilp. "Not just yet!"

"Oh, very good indeed!" cried Brass, recovering his spirits a little. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, exceedingly good! There's not another man alive who could carry it off like that. A most difficult position to carry off. But he has such a flow of good-humour, such an amazing flow!"

"Good night," said the dwarf, nodding expressively.

"Good night, sir," good night," cried the lawyer, retreating backwards towards the door. "This is a joyful occasion, indeed, extremely joyful. Ha, ha, ha! oh, very rich, indeed, re-markably so!"

Waiting until Mr. Brass's ejaculations died away in the distance (for he continued to pour them out, all the way down stairs), Quilp advanced towards the two men, who yet lingered in a kind of stupid amazement.

"Have you been dragging the river all day, gentlemen?" said the dwarf, holding the door open with great politeness.

"And yesterday, too, master."

"Dear me, you've had a deal of trouble Pray, consider everything yours that you find upon the—upon the body. Good night."

The men looked at each other, but had evidently no inclination to argue the point just then, and shuffled out of the room. This speedy clearance effected, Quilp locked the doors; and, still embracing the case-bottle, with shrugged-up shoulders and folded arms, stood looking at his insensible wife like a dismounted nightmare.

CHAPTER THE FIFTIETH.

MATRIMONIAL differences are usually discussed by the parties concerned in the form of dialogue, in which the lady bears at least her full half share. Those of Mr. and Mrs. Quilp, however, were an exception to the general rule; the remarks which they occasioned being limited to a long soliloquy on the part of the gentleman, with perhaps a few deprecatory observations from the lady, not extending beyond a trembling monosyllable uttered at long intervals, and in a very submissive and humble tone. On the present occasion, Mrs. Quilp did not for a long time venture even upon this gentle defence, but when she had recovered from her fainting-fit sat in a tearful silence, meekly listening to the reproaches of her lord and master.

Of these Mr. Quilp delivered himself with the utmost animation and rapidity, and with so many distortions of limb and feature, that even his wife, although tolerably well accustomed to his proficiency in these respects, was well nigh beside herself with alarm. But the Jamaica rum, and the joy of having occasioned a heavy disappointment, by degrees cooled Mr. Quilp's wrath; which, from being at savage heat, dropped slowly to the bantering or chuckling point, at which it steadily remained.

"So you thought I was dead and gone, did you?" said Quilp. "You thought you were a widow, eh? Ha, ha, ha, you jade!"

"Indeed Quilp," returned his wife. "I'm very sorry——"

"Who doubts it!" cried the dwarf. "You very sorry! to be sure you are. Who doubts that you're *very* sorry!"

"I don't mean sorry that you have come home again alive and well," said his wife, "but sorry that I should have been led into such a belief. I am glad to see you, Quilp; indeed I am."

In truth Mrs. Quilp did seem a great deal more glad to behold her lord than might have been expected, and did evince a degree of interest in his safety which, all things considered, was rather unaccountable. Upon Quilp, however, this circumstance made no impression, further than as it moved him to snap his fingers close to his wife's eyes, with divers grins of triumph and derision.

"How could you go away so long without saying a word to me or letting me hear of you or know anything about you?" asked the poor little woman, sobbing. "How could you be so cruel, Quilp?"

"How could I be so cruel! cruel!" cried the dwarf. "Because I was in the humour. I'm in the humour now. I shall be crue. when I like. I'm going away again."

"Not again!"

"Yes, again. I'm going away now. I'm off directly. I mean to go and live wherever the fancy seizes me, at the wharf—at the counting-house—and be a jolly bachelor. You were a widow in anticipation. Damme," screamed the dwarf, "I'll be a bachelor in earnest."

"You can't be serious, Quilp," sobbed his wife.

"I tell you," said the dwarf, exulting in his project, "that I'll be a bachelor, a devil-may-care bachelor; and I'll have my bachelor's hall at the counting-house, and at such times come near it if you dare. And mind too that I don't pounce in upon you at unseasonable hours again, for I'll be a spy upon you, and come and go like a mole or a weasel. Tom Scott—where's Tom Scott?"

"Here I am, master," cried the voice of the boy, as Quilp threw up the window.

"Wait there, you dog," returned the dwarf, "to carry a bachelor's portmanteau. Pack it up, Mrs. Quilp. Knock up the dear old lady to help; knock her up. Hallo there! Hallo!"

With these exclamations, Mr. Quilp caught up the poker, and hurrying to the door of the good lady's sleeping-closet beat upon it therewith until she awoke in inexpressible terror, thinking that her amiable son-in-law surely intended to murder her in justification of the legs she had slandered. Impressed with this idea, she was no sooner fairly awake than she screamed violently, and would have quickly precipitated herself out of the window and through a neighbouring skylight, if her daughter had not hastened in to undeceive her, and implore her assistance. Somewhat reassured by her account of the service she was required to render, Mrs. Jiniwin made her appearance in a flannel dressing-gown; and both mother and daughter, trembling with terror and cold—for the night was now far advanced—obeyed Mr. Quilp's directions in submissive silence. Prolonging his preparations as much as possible, for their greater comfort, that eccentric gentleman

superintended the packing of his wardrobe, and having added to it with his own hands, a plate, knife and fork, spoon, teacup and saucer, and other small household matters of that nature, strapped up the portmanteau, took it on his shoulders, and actually marched off without another word, and with the case-bottle (which he had never once put down) still tightly clasped under his arm. Consigning his heavier burden to the care of Tom Scott when he reached the street, taking a dram from the bottle for his own encouragement, and giving the boy a rap on the head with it as a small taste for himself, Quilp very deliberately led the way to the wharf, and reached it at between three and four o'clock in the morning.

"Snug!" said Quilp, when he had groped his way to the wooden counting-house, and opened the door with a key he carried about with him. "Beautifully snug! Call me at eight, you dog."

With no more formal leave-taking or explanation, he clutched the portmanteau, shut the door upon his attendant, and climbing on the desk, and rolling himself up as round as a hedgehog, in an old boat-cloak, fell fast asleep.

Being roused in the morning at the appointed time, and roused with difficulty, after his late fatigues, Quilp instructed Tom Scott to make a fire in the yard of sundry pieces of old timber, and to prepare some coffee for breakfast; for the better furnishing of which repast he entrusted him with certain small moneys, to be expended in the purchase of hot rolls, butter, sugar, Yarmouth bloaters, and other articles of housekeeping; so that in a few minutes a savoury meal was smoking on the board. With this substantial comfort, the dwarf regaled himself to his heart's content; and being highly satisfied with this free and gipsy mode of life (which he had often meditated, as offering, whenever he chose to avail himself of it, an agreeable freedom from the restraints of matrimony, and a choice means of keeping Mrs. Quilp and her mother in a state of incessant agitation and suspense), bestirred himself to improve his retreat, and render it more commodious and comfortable.

With this view, he issued forth to a place hard by, where such stores were sold; purchased a second-hand hammock, and had it slung in seamanlike fashion from the ceiling of the counting-house. He also caused to be erected, in the same mouldy cabin, an old ship's stove with a rusty funnel to carry the smoke through the roof; and these arrangements completed, surveyed them with ineffable delight.

"I've got a country-house like Robinson Crusoe"—said the dwarf, ogling the accommodations; "a solitary, sequestered, desolate-island sort of spot, where I can be quite alone when I have business on hand, and be secure from all spies and listeners. Nobody near me here, but rats, and they are fine stealthy secret fellows. I shall be as merry as a grig among these gentry. I'll look out for one like Christopher, and poison him—ha, ha, ha! Business though—business—we must be mindful of business in the midst of pleasure, and the time has flown this morning, I declare."

Enjoining Tom Scott to await his return, and not to stand upon his head, or throw a summerset, or so much as walk upon his hands meanwhile, on pain of lingering torments, the dwarf threw himself into a boat, and crossing to the other side of the river, and then speeding away on foot, reached Mr. Swiveller's usual house of entertainment in Bevis Marks, just as that gentleman sat down alone to dinner in its dusky parlour.

"Dick"—said the dwarf, thrusting his head in at the door, "my pet, my pupil, the apple of my eye, hey, hey!"

"Oh you're there, are you?" returned Mr. Swiveller, "*how* are you?

"How's Dick?" retorted Quilp. "How's the cream of clerkship, eh?"

"Why, rather sour, sir," replied Mr Swiveller. "Beginning to border upon cheesiness, in fact."

"What's the matter?" said the dwarf advancing. "Has Sally proved unkind 'Of all the girls that are so smart, there's none like—' eh Dick!"

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Swiveller, eating his dinner with great gravity, "none like her. She's the sphynx of private life is Sally B."

"You're out of spirits," said Quilp, drawing up a chair. "What's the matter?"

"The law don't agree with me," returned Dick. "It isn't moist enough, and there's too much confinement. I have been thinking of running away."

"Bah!" said the dwarf. "Where would you run to, Dick?"

"I don't know" returned Mr. Swiveller. "Towards Highgate, I suppose. Perhaps the bells might strike up 'Turn again Swiveller, Lord Mayor of London.' Whittington's name was Dick. I wish cats were scarcer."

Quilp looked at his companion with his eyes screwed up into a comical expression of curiosity, and patiently awaited his further explanation; upon which, however, Mr. Swiveller appeared in no hurry to enter, as he ate a very long dinner in profound silence, and finally pushed away his

plate, threw himself back into his chair, folded his arms, and stared ruefully at the fire, in which some ends of cigars were smoking on their own account, and sending up a fragrant odour.

"Perhaps you'd like a bit of cake"—said Dick, at last turning to the dwarf, "You're quite welcome to it. You ought to be, for it's of your making."

"What do you mean?" said Quilp.

Mr. Swiveller replied by taking from his pocket a small and very greasy parcel, slowly unfolding it, and displaying a little slab of plum cake, extremely indigestible in appearance, and bordered with a paste of white sugar an inch and a half deep.

"What should you say this was?" demanded Mr. Swiveller.

"It looks like bride-cake," replied the dwarf, grinning.

"And whose should you say it was?" inquired Mr. Swiveller, rubbing the pastry against his nose with a dreadful calmness. "Whose?"

"Not—"

"Yes" said Dick, "the same. You needn't mention her name. There's no such name now. Her name is Cheggs now, Sophy Cheggs. Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs, and my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Cheggs."

With this extemporary adaptation of a popular ballad to the distressing circumstances of his own case, Mr. Swiveller folded up the parcel again, beat it very flat between the palms of his hands, thrust it into his breast, buttoned his coat over it, and folded his arms upon the whole.

"Now I hope you're satisfied, sir"—said Dick; "and I hope Fred's satisfied. You went partners in the mischief, and I hope you like it. This is the triumph I was to have, is it? It's like the old country-dance of that name, where there are two gentlemen to one lady, and one has her and the other hasn't, but comes limping up behind to make out the figure. But it's Destiny, and mine's a crusher!"

Disguising his secret joy in Mr. Swiveller's defeat, Daniel Quilp adopted the surest means of soothing him, by ringing the bell, and ordering in a supply of rosy wine (that is to say of its usual representative), which he put about with great alacrity, calling upon Mr. Swiveller to pledge him in various toasts derisive of Cheggs, and eulogistic of the happiness of single men. Such was their impression on Mr. Swiveller, coupled with the reflection that no man could oppose his destiny, that in a very short space of time his spirits rose surprisingly, and he was enabled to give the dwarf an account of the receipt of the cake, which, it appeared, had been brought to Bevis Marks by the two surviving Miss Wacklese in person, and delivered at the office door with much giggling and joyfulness.

"Ha!" said Quilp. "It will be our turn to giggle soon. And that reminds me—you spoke of young Trent—where is he?"

Mr. Swiveller explained that his respectable friend had recently accepted a responsible situation in a locomotive gaming-house, and was at that time absent on a professional tour among the adventurous spirits of Great Britain.

"That's unfortunate," said the dwarf, "for I came, in fact, to ask you about him. A thought has occurred to me. Dick; your friend over the way—"

"Which friend?"

"In the first floor."

"Yes?"

"Your friend in the first floor, Dick, may know him."

"No he don't," said Mr. Swiveller, shaking his head.

"Don't. No, because he has never seen him," rejoined Quilp; "but if we were to bring them together, who knows, Dick, but Fred, properly introduced, would serve his turn almost as well as little Nell or her grandfather—who knows but it might make the young fellow's fortune, and, through him, yours, eh?"

"Why, the fact is, you see," said Mr. Swiveller, "that they *have been* brought together."

"Have been!" cried the dwarf, looking suspiciously at his companion. "Through whose means?"

"Through mine," said Dick, slightly confused. Didn't I mention it to you the last time you called over yonder?"

"You know you didn't," returned the dwarf.

"I believe you're right," said Dick. "No. I didn't, I recollect. Oh yes, I brought 'em together that very day. It was Fred's suggestion.

"And what came of it?"

"Why, instead of my friend's bursting into tears when he knew who Fred was, embracing him kindly, and telling him that he was his grandfather, or his grandmother in disguise, (which we fully expected), he flew into a tremendous passion; called him all manner of names; said it was in a great measure his fault that little Nell and the old gentleman had ever been brought to poverty; didn't hint at our taking anything to drink; and—and in short rather turned us out of the room than otherwise."

"That's strange," said the dwarf, musing

"So we remarked to each other at the time," returned Dick coolly, "but quite true."

Quilp was plainly staggered by this intelligence, over which he brooded for some time in moody silence, often raising his eyes to Mr. Swiveller's face, and sharply scanning its expression. As he could read in it, however, no additional information or anything to lead him to believe he had spoken falsely; and as Mr. Swiveller, left to his own meditations, sighed deeply, and was evidently growing maudlin on the subject of Mrs. Cheggs; the dwarf soon broke up the conference and took his departure, leaving the bereaved one to his melancholy ruminations.

"Have been brought together, eh?" said the dwarf as he walked the streets alone. "My friend has stolen a march upon me. It led him to nothing, and therefore is no great matter, save in the intention. I'm glad he has lost his mistress. Ha, ha! The blockhead mustn't leave the .aw at present. I'm sure of him where ne is, whenever I want him for my own purposes, and, besides, he's a good unconscious spy on Brass, and tells, in his cups, all that he sees and hears. You're useful to me Dick, and cost nothing but a little treating now and then. I am not sure that it may not be worth while, before long, to take credit with the stranger, Dick, by discovering your designs upon the child; but for the present, we'll remain the best friends in the world, with your good leave."

Pursuing these thoughts, and gasping as he went along, after his own peculiar fashion, Mr. Quilp once more crossed the Thames, and shut himself up in his Bachelor's Hall, which, by reason of its newly-erected chimney depositing the smoke inside the room and carrying none of it off, was not quite so agreeable as more fastidious people might have desired. Such inconveniences, however, instead of disgusting the dwarf with his new abode, rather suited his humour; so, after dining luxuriously from the public-house, he lighted his pipe, and smoked against the chimney until nothing of him was visible through the mist, but a pair of red and highly inflamed eyes, with sometimes a dim vision of his head and face, as, in a violent fit of coughing, he slightlv stirred the smoke and scattered the heavy wreaths by which they were obscured. In the midst of this atmosphere, which must infallibly have smothered any other man, Mr. Quilp passed the evening with great cheerfulness; solacing himself all the time with the pipe and the case-bottle; and occasionally entertaining himself with a melodious howl, intended for a song, but bearing not the faintest resemblance to any scrap of any piece of music, vocal or instrumental, ever invented by man. Thus he amused himself until nearly midnight, when he turned into his hammock with the utmost satisfaction.

The first sound that met his ears in the morning—as he half opened his eyes, and, finding himself so unusually near the ceiling, entertained a drowsy idea that he must have been transformed into a fly or blue-bottle in the course of the night,—was that of a stifled sobbing and weeping in the room. Peeping cautiously over the side of his hammock, he descried Mrs. Quilp, to whom, after contemplating her for some time in silence, he communicated a violent start by suddenly yelling out,

"Halloa!"

"Oh Quilp!" cried his poor little wife, looking up. "How you frightened me!"

"I meant to, you jade," returned the dwarf. "What do you want here? I'm dead, an't I?"

"Oh please come home, do come home," said Mrs. Quilp, sobbing; "we'll never do so any more Quilp, and after all it was only a mistake that grew out of our anxiety."

"Out of your anxiety," grinned the dwarf. "Yes, I know that — out of your anxiety for my death. I shall come home when I please, I tell you. I shall come home when I please, and go when I please. I'll be a Will o' the Wisp, now here, now there, dancing about you always, starting up when you least expect me, and keeping you in a constant state of restlessness and irritation. Will you begone?"

Mrs. Quilp durst only make a gesture of entreaty.

"I tell you no," cried the dwarf. "No. If you dare to come here again unless you're sent for, I'll keep watch-dogs in the yard that'll growl and bite—I'll have man-traps, cunningly altered and improved for catching women — I'll have spring guns, that shall explode when you tread upon the wires, and blow you into little pieces. Will you begone?"

"Do forgive me. Do come back," said his wife, earnestly.

"No-o-o-o-o!" roared Quilp. "Not till my own good time, and then I'll return again as often as I choose, and be accountable to nobody for my goings or comings. You see the door there. Will you go?"

Mr. Quilp delivered this last command in such a very energetic voice, and moreover accompanied it with such a sudden gesture, indicative of an intention to spring out of his hammock, and, night-capped as he was, bear his wife home again through the pub-

lic streets, that she sped away like an arrow. Her worthy lord stretched his neck and eyes until she had crossed the yard, and then, not at all sorry to have had this opportunity of carrying his point, and asserting the sanctity of his castle, fell into an immoderate fit of laughter, and laid himself down to sleep again.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-FIRST.

The bland and open-hearted proprietor of Bachelor's Hall, slept on amidst the congenial accompaniments of rain, mud, dirt, damp, fog, and rats, until late in the day; when, summoning his valet Tom Scott to assist him to rise, and to prepare breakfast, he quitted his couch, and made his toilet. This duty performed, and his repast ended, he again betook himself to Bevis Marks.

This visit was not intended for Mr. Swiveller, but for his friend and employer Mr. Sampson Brass. Both gentlemen however were from home, nor was the life and light of law, Miss Sally, at her post either. The fact of their joint desertion of the office was made known to all comers by a scrap of paper in the hand-writing of Mr. Swiveller, which was attached to the bell-handle, and which, giving the reader no clue to the time of day when it was first posted, furnished him with the rather vague and unsatisfactory information that that gentleman would "return in an hour."

"There's a servant, I suppose," said the dwarf, knocking at the house-door. "She'll do."

After a sufficiently long interval, the door was opened, and a small voice immediately

accosted him with, "Oh! Please will you leave a card or message?"

"Eh?" said the dwarf, looking down (it was something quite new to him) upon the small servant.

To this, the child, conducting her conversation as upon the occasion of her first interview with Mr. Swiveller, again replied, "Oh please will you leave a card or message?"

"I'll write a note," said the dwarf, pushing past her into the office; "and mind your master has it directly he comes home." So Mr. Quilp climbed up to the top of a tall stool to write the note, and the small servant, carefully tutored for such emergencies, looked on, with her eyes wide open, ready, if he so much as abstracted a wafer, to rush into the street and give the alarm to the police.

As Mr. Quilp folded his note (which was soon written: being a very short one) he encountered the gaze of the small servant. He looked at her long and earnestly.

"How are you?" said the dwarf, moistening a wafer with horrible grimaces.

The small servant, perhaps frightened by his looks, returned no audible reply; but it appeared from the motion of her lips that she was inwardly repeating the same form of expression concerning the note or message.

"Do they use you ill here? is your mistress a Tartar?" said Quilp with a chuckle.

In reply to the last interrogation, the small servant, with a look of infinite cunning, mingled with fear, screwed up her mouth very tight and round, and nodded violently.

Whether there was anything in the peculiar slyness of her action which fascinated Mr. Quilp, or anything in the expression of her features at the moment which attracted his attention for some other reason; or whether it merely occurred to him as a pleasant whim to stare the small servant out of countenance; certain it is, that he planted his elbows square and firmly on the desk, and squeezing up his cheeks with his hands, looked at her fixedly.

"Where do you come from?" he said after a long pause, stroking his chin.

"I don't know."

"What's your name?"

"Nothing."

"Nonsense!" retorted Quilp. "What does your mistress call you when she wants you?"

"A little devil," said the child.

She added in the same breath, as if fearful of any further questioning, "But please will you leave a card or message?"

These unusual answers might naturally have provoked some further inquiries.—Quilp, however, without uttering another word, withdrew his eyes from the small servant, stroked his chin more thoughtfully than before, and then bending over the note as if to direct it with scrupulous and hair-breadth nicety, looked at her, covertly but very narrowly, from under his bushy eyebrows. The result of this secret survey was, that he shaded his face with his hands, and laughed slyly and noiselessly, until every vein in it was swollen almost to bursting. Pulling his hat over his brow to conceal his mirth and its effects, he tossed the letter to the child, and hastily withdrew.

Once in the street, moved by some secret impulse, he laughed, and held his sides, and laughed again, and tried to peer through the dusty area railings as if to catch another glimpse of the child, until he was quite tired out. At last, he travelled back to the Wilderness, which was within rifle-shot of his bachelor retreat, and ordered tea in the wooden summer-house that afternoon for three persons; an invitation to Miss Sally Brass and her brother to partake of that entertainment at that place, having been the object both of his journey and his note.

It was not precisely the kind of weather in which people usually take tea in summer-houses, far less in summer-houses in an advanced state of decay, and overlooking the slimy banks of a great river at low water. Nevertheless, it was in this choice retreat that Mr. Quilp ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and it was beneath its cracked and leaky roof that he in due course of time received Mr. Sampson and his sister Sally.

"You're fond of the beauties of nature," said Quilp with a grin. "Is this charming, Brass? Is it unusual, unsophisticated, primitive?"

"It's delightful indeed, sir," replied the lawyer.

"Cool?" said Quilp.

"N-not particularly so, I think, sir," rejoined Brass, with his teeth chattering in his head.

"Perhaps a little damp and ague-ish?" said Quilp.

"Just damp enough to be cheerful, sir," rejoined Brass. "Nothing more, sir, nothing more."

"And Sally?" said the delighted dwarf. "Does *she* like it?"

"She'll like it better," returned that strong-minded lady, "when she has tea; so let us have it, and don't bother."

"Sweet Sally!" cried Quilp, extending his arms as if about to embrace her, "gentle, charming, overwhelming Sally."

"He's a very remarkable man indeed!"

soliloquised Mr. Brass. "He's quite a Troubadour, you know; quite a Troubadour!"

These complimentary expressions were uttered in a somewhat absentand distracted manner; for the unfortunate lawyer, besides having a bad cold in his head, had got wet in coming, and would have willingly borne some pecuniary sacrifice if he could have shifted his present raw quarters to a warm room, and have dried himself at a fire. Quilp, however,—who, beyond the gratification of his demon whims, owed Sampson some acknowledgment of the part he had played in the mourning scene of which he had been a hidden witness,—marked these symptoms of uneasiness with a delight past all expression, and derived from them a secret joy which the costliest banquet could never have afforded him.

It is worthy of remark too, as illustrating a little feature in the character of Miss Sally Brass, that, although on her own account she would have borne the discomforts of the Wilderness with a very ill grace, and would probably, indeed, have walked off before the tea appeared, she no sooner beheld the latent uneasiness and misery of her brother than she developed a grim satisfaction, and began to enjoy herself after her own manner. Though the wet came stealing through the roof and trickling down upon their heads, Miss Brass uttered no complaint, but presided over the tea equipage with imperturbable composure. While Mr. Quilp, in his uproarious hospitality, seated himself upon an empty beer-barrel, vaunted the place as the most beautiful and comfortable in the three kingdoms, and elevating his glass, drank to their next merry-meeting in that jovial spot; and Mr. Brass, with the rain plashing down into his tea-cup, made a dismal attempt to pluck up his spirits and appear at his ease; and Tom Scott, who was in waiting at the door under an old umbrella, exulted in his agonies and bade fair to split his sides with laughing; while all this was passing, Miss Sally Brass, unmindful of the wet which dripped down upon her own feminine person and fair apparel, sat placidly behind the tea-board, erect and grizzly, contemplating the unhappiness of her brother with a mind at ease, and content, in her amiable disregard of self, to sit there all night, witnessing the torments which his avaricious and grovelling nature compelled him to endure and forbade him to resent. And this, it must be observed, or the illustration would be incomplete, although in a business point of view she had the strongest sympathy with Mr. Sampson, and would have been beyond

measure indignant, if he had thwarted their client in any one respect.

In the height of his boisterous merriment, Mr. Quilp having on some pretence dismissed his attendant sprite for the moment, resumed his usual manner all at once, dismounted from his cask, and laid his hand upon the lawyer's sleeve.

"A word," said the dwarf, "before we go further. "Sally, hark'ee for a minute."

Miss Sally drew closer, as if accustomed to business conferences with their host which were the better for not having air.

"Business," said the dwarf, glancing from brother to sister. "Very private business. Lay your heads together when you 're by yourselves."

"Certainly, sir," returned Brass, taking out his pocket-book and pencil. "I 'll take down the heads, if you please, sir. Remarkable documents," added the lawyer, raising his eyes to the ceiling, "most remarkable documents. He states his points so clearly that it 's a treat to have 'em! I don't know any act of parliament that 's equal to him in clearness."

"I shall deprive you of a treat," said Quilp drily. "Put up your book. We don't want any documents. So. There 's a lad named Kit—"

Miss Sally nodded, implying that she knew of him.

"Kit!" said Mr. Sampson.—"Kit! Ha! I've heard the name before, but I don't exactly call to mind—I don't exactly—"

"You 're as slow as a tortoise, and more thick-headed than a rhinoceros," returned his obliging client with an impatient gesture.

"He 's extremely pleasant!" cried the obsequious Sampson. "His acquaintance with Natural History too is surprising. Quite a Buffoon, quite!"

There is no doubt that Mr. Brass intended some compliment or other; and it has been argued with show of reason that he would have said Buffon, but made use of a superfluous vowel. Be this as it may, Quilp gave him no time for correction, as he performed that office himself by more than tapping him on the head with the handle of his umbrella.

"Don't let 's have any wrangling," said Miss Sally, staying his hand. "I 've showed you that I know him, and that 's enough."

"She's always foremost!" said the dwarf, patting her on the back and looking contemptuously at Sampson. "I don't like Kit, Sally."

"Nor I," rejoined Miss Brass.

"Nor I," said Sampson.

"Why, that 's right!" cried Quilp. "Half our work is done already. This Kit is one of your honest people, one of your fair characters; a prowling, prying hound; a hypocrite; a double-faced, white-livered, sneaking spy; a crouching cur to those that feed and coax him, and a barking, yelping dog to all besides."

"Fearfully eloquent!" cried Brass, with a sneeze. "Quite appalling!"

"Come to the point," said Miss Sally "and don't talk so much."

"Right again!" exclaimed Quilp, with another contemptuous look at Sampson, "always foremost! I say, Sally, he is a yelping, insolent dog to all besides, and most of all, to me. In short, I owe him a grudge."

"That 's enough, sir," said Sampson.

"No, it 's not enough, sir," sneered Quilp; "will you hear me out? Besides that I owe him a grudge on that account, he thwarts me at this minute, and stands between me and an end which might otherwise prove a golden one to us all. Apart from that, I repeat that he crosses my humour, and I hate him. Now, you know the lad, and can guess the rest. Devise your own means of putting him out of my way, and execute them. Shall it be done?"

"It shall, sir," said Sampson.

"Then give me your hand," retorted Quilp. "Sally, girl, yours. I rely as much, or more, on you than him. Tom Scott comes back. Lantern, pipes, more grog, and a jolly night of it!"

No other word was spoken, no other look exchanged, which had the slightest reference to this, the real occasion of their meeting. The trio were well accustomed to act together, and were linked to each other by ties of mutual interest and advantage, and nothing more was needed. Resuming his boisterous manner with the same ease with which he had thrown it off, Quilp was in an instant the same uproarious, reckless little savage, he had been a few seconds before. It was ten o'clock at night before the amiable Sally supported her beloved and loving brother from the Wilderness, by which time he needed the utmost support her tender frame could render; his walk being for some unknown reason anything but steady, and his legs constantly doubling up, in unexpected places.

Overpowered, notwithstanding his late prolonged slumbers, by the fatigues of the last few days, the dwarf lost no time in creeping to his dainty house, and was soon dreaming in his hammock. Leaving him to visions, in which perhaps the quiet figures we quitted in the old church porch were not without their share, be it our task to rejoin them as they sat and watched.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-SECOND.

After a long time, the schoolmaster appeared at the wicket-gate of the churchyard, and hurried towards them; jingling in his hand, as he came along, a bundle of rusty keys. He was quite breathless with pleasure and haste when he reached the porch, and at first could only point towards the old building which the child had been contemplating so earnestly.

"You see those two old houses," he said at last

"Yes, surely," replied Nell. "I have been looking at them nearly all the time you have been away."

"And you would have looked at them more curiously yet, if you could have guessed what I have to tell you," said her friend. "One of those houses is mine."

Without saying any more, or giving the child time to reply, the schoolmaster took her hand, and, his honest face quite radiant with exultation, led her to the place of which he spoke.

They stopped before its low arched door. After trying several of the keys in vain, the schoolmaster found one to fit the huge lock, which turned back, creaking, and admitted them into the house.

The room into which they entered was a vaulted chamber, once nobly ornamented by cunning architects, and still retaining, in its beautiful groined roof and rich stone tracery, choice remnants of its ancient splendour. Foliage carved in the stone, and emulating the mastery of Nature's hand, yet remained to tell how many times the leaves outside had come and gone, while it lived on unchanged. The broken figures supporting the burden of the chimney-piece, though mutilated, were still distinguishable for what they had been—far different from the dust without—and showed sadly by the empty hearth, like creatures who had outlived their kind, and mourned their own too slow decay.

In some old time—for even change was old in that old place—a wooden partition had been constructed in one part of the chamber to form a sleeping-closet, into which the light was admitted at the same period by a rude window, or rather niche, cut in the solid wall. This screen, together with two seats in the broad chimney, had at some forgotten date been part of the church or convent; for the oak, hastily appropriated to its present purpose, had been little altered from its former shape, and presented to the eye a pile of fragments of rich carving from old monkish stalls.

An open door leading to a small room or cell, dim with the light that came through leaves of ivy, completed the interior of this portion of the ruin. It was not quite destitute of furniture. A few strange chairs, whose arms and legs looked as though they had dwindled away with age; a table, the very spectre of its race; a great old chest that had once held records in the church, with other quaintly-fashioned domestic necessaries, and store of fire-wood for the winter, were scattered around, and gave evident tokens of its occupation as a dwelling-place at no very distant time.

The child looked around her with that solemn feeling with which we contemplate the work of ages that have become but drops of water in the great ocean of eternity. The old man had followed them, but they were all three hushed for a space, and drew their breath softly, as if they feared to break the silence even by so slight a sound.

"It is a very beautiful place!" said the child, in a low voice.

"I almost feared you thought otherwise," returned the schoolmaster. "You shivered when we first came in, as if you felt it cold or gloomy."

"It was not that," said Nell, glancing round with a slight shudder. "Indeed I cannot tell you what it was, but when I saw the outside, from the church porch, the same feeling came over me. It is its being so old and grey, perhaps."

"A peaceful place to live in, don't you think so?" said her friend.

"Oh yes," rejoined the child, clasping her hands earnestly. "A quiet, happy place—a place to live and learn to die in!" She would have said more, but that the energy of her thoughts caused her voice to falter, and come in trembling whispers from her lips.

"A place to live, and learn to live, and gather health of mind and body in," said the schoolmaster; "for this old house is yours."

"Ours!" cried the child.

"Ay," returned the schoolmaster gaily, "for many a merry year to come, I hope, I shall be a close neighbour—only next door—but this house is yours."

Having now disburdened himself of his great suprise, the schoolmaster sat down, and drawing Nell to his side, told her how he had learned that that ancient tenement had been occupied for a very long time by an old person, nearly a hundred years of age, who kept the keys of the church, opened and closed it for the services, and showed it to strangers; how she had died not many weeks ago, and nobody had yet been found to fill the office; how, learning all this in an interview with the sexton, who was confined to his bed by rheumatism, he had been bold to make mention of his fellow-traveller, which had been so favourably received by that high authority, that he had taken courage, acting on his advice, to propound the matter to the clergyman. In a word, the result of his exertions was, that Nell and her grandfather were to be carried before the last-named gentleman next day; and his approval of their conduct and appearance reserved as a matter of form, that they were already appointed to the vacant post.

"There's a small allowance of money," said the schoolmaster. "It is not much, but still enough to live upon in this retired spot. By clubbing our funds together, we shall do bravely; no fear of that."

"Heaven bless and prosper you!" sobbed the child.

"Amen, my dear," returned her friend cheerfully; "and all of us, as it will, and has, in leading us through sorrow and trouble to this tranquil life. But we must look at *my* house now. Come!"

They repaired to the other tenement, tried the rusty keys as before; at length found the right one, and opened the worm-eaten door. It led into a chamber, vaulted and old, like that from which they had come, but not so spacious, and having only one little room attached. It was not difficult to divine that the other house was of right the schoolmaster's, and that he had chosen for himself the least commodious, in his care and regard for them. Like the adjoining habitation, it held such old articles of furniture as were absolutely necessary, and had its stock of fire-wood.

To make those dwellings as habitable and full of comfort as they could, was now their pleasant care. In a short time, each had its cheerful fire glowing and crackling on the hearth, and reddening the pale old walls with a hale and healthy blush. Nell, busily plying her needle, repaired the tattered window-hangings, drew together the rents that time had worn in the threadbare scraps of

carpets, and made them whole and decent. The schoolmaster swept and smoothed the ground before the door, trimmed the long grass, trained the ivy and creeping plants, which hung their drooping heads in melancholy neglect; and gave to the outer walls a cheering air of home. The old man, sometimes by his side and sometimes with the child, lent his aid to both, went here and there on little patient services, and was happy.

Neighbours too, as they came from work, proffered their help; or sent their children with such small presents or loans as the strangers needed most. It was a busy day; and night came on, and found them wondering that there was yet so much to do, and that it should be dark so soon.

They took their supper together in the house which may be henceforth called the child's; and when they had finished their meal drew round the fire, and almost in whispers—their hearts were too quiet and glad for loud expression—discussed their future plans. Before they separated, the schoolmaster read some prayers aloud; and then, full of gratitude and happiness, they parted for the night.

At that silent hour, when her grandfather was sleeping peacefully in his bed, and every sound was hushed, the child lingered before the dying embers, and thought of her past fortunes as if they had been a dream and she only now awoke. The glare of the sinking flame, reflected in the oaken panels, whose carved tops were dimly seen in the gloom of the dusky roof—the aged walls, where strange shadows came and went with every flickering of the fire—the solemn presence, within, of that decay which falls on senseless things the most enduring in their nature; and, without, and round about on every side, of Death—filled her with deep and thoughtful feelings, but with none of terror or alarm. A change had been gradually stealing over her, in the time of her loneliness and sorrow. With failing strength and heightening resolution, there had sprung up a purified and altered mind; there had grown in her bosom blessed thoughts and hopes, which are the portion of few but the weak and drooping. There were none to see the frail, perishable figure, as it glided from the fire and leaned pensively at the open casement; none but the stars to look into the upturned face and read its history. The old church-bell rang out the hour with a mournful sound, as if it had grown sad from so much communing with the dead and unheeded warning to the living; the fallen leaves rustled; the grass stirred upon the graves; all else was still and sleeping.

Some of those dreamless sleepers lay close within the shadow of the church—touching the wall, as if they clung to it for comfort and protection. Others had chosen to lie beneath the changing shade of trees; others by the path, that footsteps might come near them; others among the graves of little children. Some had desired to rest beneath the very ground they had trodden in their daily walks; some, where the setting sun might shine upon their beds; some, where its light would fall upon them when it rose. Perhaps not one of the unprisoned souls had been able quite to separate itself in living thought from its old companion. If any had, it had still felt for it a love like that which captives have been known to bear towards the cell in which they have been long confined, and even at parting hung upon its narrow bounds affectionately.

It was long before the child closed the window, and approached her bed. Again something of the same sensation as before—an involuntary chill—a momentary feeling akin to fear—but vanishing directly, and leaving no alarm behind. Again too, dreams of the little scholar, of the roof opening, and a column of bright faces, rising far away into the sky, as she had seen in some old scriptural picture once, and looking down on her, asleep. It was a sweet and happy dream. The quiet spot, outside, seemed to remain the same, save that there was music in the air, and a sound of angels' wings. After a time the sisters came there, hand in hand, and stood among the graves. And then the dream grew dim, and faded.

With the brightness and joy of morning, came the renewal of yesterday's labours, the revival of its pleasant thoughts, the restoration of its energies, cheerfulness, and hope. They worked gaily in ordering and arranging their houses until noon, and then went to visit the clergyman.

He was a simple-hearted old gentleman, of a shrinking, subdued spirit, accustomed to retirement, and very little acquainted with the world, which he had left many years before to come and settle in that place. His wife had died in the house in which he still lived, and he had long since lost sight of any earthly cares or hopes beyond it.

He received them very kindly, and at once showed an interest in Nell; asking her name, and age, her birth-place, the circumstances which had led her there, and so forth. The schoolmaster had already told her story. They had no other friends or home to leave, he said, and had come to share his fortunes. He loved the child as though she were his own

"Well, well," said the clergyman. "Let it be as you desire. She is very young."

"Old in adversity and trial, sir," replied the schoolmaster.

"God help her! Let her rest, and forget them," said the old gentleman. "But an old church is a dull and gloomy place for one so young as you, my child."

"Oh no, sir," returned Nell. "I have no such thoughts, indeed."

"I would rather see her dancing on the green at nights," said the old gentleman, laying his hand upon her head, and smiling sadly, "than have her sitting in the shadow of our mouldering arches. You must look to this, and see that her heart does not grow heavy among these solemn ruins. Your request is granted, friend."

After more kind words, they withdrew, and repaired to the child's house; where they were yet in conversation on their happy fortune, when another friend appeared.

This was a little old gentleman, who lived in the parsonage house, and had resided there (so they learnt soon afterwards) ever since the death of the clergyman's wife, which had happened fifteen years before. He had been his college friend and always his close companion; in the first shock of his grief had come to console and comfort him; and from that time they had never parted company. The little old gentleman was the active spirit of the place; the adjuster of all differences, the promoter of all merry-makings, the dispenser of his friend's bounty and of no small charity of his own besides; the universal mediator, comforter, and friend. None of the simple villagers had cared to ask his name, or, when they knew it, to store it in their memory. Perhaps from some vague rumour of his college honours which had been whispered abroad upon his first arrival, perhaps because he was an unmarried, unincumbered gentleman, he had been called the bachelor. The name pleased him, or suited him as well as any other, and the Bachelor he had ever since remained. And the bachelor it was, it may be added, who with his own hands had laid in the stock of fuel which the wanderers had found in their new habitations.

The bachelor, then—to call him by his usual appellation—lifted the latch, showed his little round mild face for a moment at the door, and stepped into the room like one who was no stranger to it.

"You are Mr. Marton, the new schoolmaster?" he said, greeting Nell's kind friend.

"I am, sir."

"You come well recommended, and I am glad to see you. I should have been in the way yesterday, expecting you, but I rode across the country to carry a message from a sick mother to her daughter in service some miles off, and have but just now returned. This is our young church keeper? You are not the less welcome, friend, for her sake, or for this old man's; nor the worse teacher for having learnt humanity."

"She has been ill, sir, very lately," said the schoolmaster, in answer to the look with which their visiter regarded Nell when he had kissed her cheek.

"Yes, yes. I know she has," he rejoined. "There have been suffering and heartache here."

"Indeed there have, sir."

The little old gentleman glanced at the grandfather, and back again at the child, whose hand he took tenderly in his, and held.

"You will be happier here," he said; "we will try, at least, to make you so. You have made great improvements here already. Are they the work of your hands?"

"Yes, sir."

"We may make some others—not better in themselves, but with better means perhaps," said the bachelor. "Let us see now, let us see."

Nell accompanied him into the other little rooms, and over both the houses, in which he found various small comforts wanting, which he engaged to supply from a certain collection of odds and ends he had at home, and which must have been a very miscellaneous and extensive one, as it comprehended the most opposite articles imaginable. They all came, however, and came without loss of time; for the little old gentleman, disappearing for some five or ten minutes, presently returned, laden with old shelves, rugs, blankets, and other household gear, and followed by a boy bearing a similar load. These being cast on the floor in a promiscuous heap, yielded a quantity of occupation in arranging, erecting, and putting away; the superintendence of which task evidently afforded the old gentleman extreme delight, and engaged him for some time with great briskness and activity. When nothing more was left to be done, he charged the boy to run off and bring his schoolmates to be marshalled before their new master, and solemnly reviewed.

"As good a set of fellows, Marton, as you'd wish to see," he said, turning to the schoolmaster when the boy was gone; "but I don't let 'em know I think so. That wouldn't do, at all."

The messenger soon returned at the head of a long row of urchins, great and small, who, being confronted by the bachelor at the house door, fell into various convulsions

of politeness; clutching their hats and caps, squeezing themselves into the smallest possible dimensions, and making all manner of bows and scrapes; which the little gentleman contemplated with excessive satisfaction, and expressed his approval of by a great many nods and smiles. Indeed, his approbation of the boys was by no means so scrupulously disguised as he had led the schoolmaster to suppose, inasmuch as it broke out in sundry loud whispers and confidential remarks which were perfectly audible to them every one.

"This first boy, schoolmaster," said the bachelor, "is John Owen; a lad of good parts, sir, and frank, honest temper; but too thoughtless, too playful, too light-headed by far. That boy, my good sir, would break his neck with pleasure, and deprive his parents of their chief comfort—and between ourselves when you come to see him at hare and hounds, taking the fence and ditch by the finger-post, and sliding down the face of the little quarry, you 'll never forget it. It 's beautiful!"

John Owen having been thus rebuked, and being in perfect possession of the speech aside, the bachelor singled out another boy.

"Now, look at that lad, sir," said the bachelor. "You see that fellow! Richard Evans his name is, sir. An amazing boy to learn, blessed with a good memory, and a ready understanding, and moreover with a good voice and ear for psalm-singing, in which he is the best among us. Yet, sir, that boy will come to a bad end, he 'll never die in his bed; he 's always falling asleep in church in sermon time—and, to tell you the truth, Mr. Marton, I always did the same at his age, and feel quite certain that it was natural to my constitution, and I couldn't help it."

This hopeful pupil edified by the above terrible reproval, the bachelor turned to another.

"But if we talk of examples to be shunned," said he, "if we come to boys that should be a warning and a beacon to all their fellows, here 's the one, and I hope you won't spare him. This is the lad, sir; this one with the blue eyes and light hair This is a swimmer, sir, this fellow—a diver, Lord save us! This is a boy, sir, who had a fancy for plunging into eighteen feet of water with his clothes on, and bringing up a blind man's dog, who was being drowned by the weight of his chain and collar, while his master stood wringing his hands upon the bank, bewailing the loss of his guide and friend. I sent the boy two guineas anonymously, sir," added the bachelor, in his peculiar whisper, "directly I heard of it; but never mention it on any account, for he hasn't the least idea that it came from me."

Having disposed of this culprit, the bachelor turned to another, and from him to another, and so on through the whole array, laying, for their wholesome restriction within due bounds, the same cutting emphasis on such of their propensities as were dearest to his heart and were unquestionably referable to his own precept and example. Thoroughly persuaded in the end that he had made them miserable by his severity, he dismissed them with a small present, and an admonition to walk quietly home, without any leapings, scufflings, or turnings out of the way; which injunction (he informed the schoolmaster in the same audible confidence) he did not think he could have obeyed when he was a boy, had his life depended on it.

Hailing these little tokens of the bachelor's disposition as so many assurances of his own welcome course from that time, the schoolmaster parted from him with a light heart and joyous spirits, and deemed himself one of the happiest men on earth. The windows of the two old houses were ruddy again with the reflection of the cheerful fires that burnt within; and the bachelor and his friend, pausing to look upon them as they returned from their evening walk, spoke softly together of the beautiful child, and looked round upon the churchyard with a sigh.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-THIRD.

Nell was stirring early in the morning; and having discharged her household tasks, and put everything in order for the good schoolmaster (though sorely against his will, for he would have spared her the pains), took down, from its nail by the fire side, a little bundle of keys with which the bachelor had formally invested her on the previous day, and went out alone to visit the old church.

The sky was serene and bright, the air clear, perfumed with the fresh scent of newly-fallen leaves, and grateful to every sense. The neighbouring stream sparkled, and rolled onward with a tuneful sound; the dew glistened on the green mounds, like tears shed by good spirits over the dead.

Some young children sported among the tombs, and hid from each other with laughing faces. They had an infant with them, and had laid it down asleep upon a child's grave, in a little bed of leaves. It was a new grave—the resting-place, perhaps, of some little creature, who, meek and patient in its illness, had often sat and watched them, and now seemed to their minds scarcely changed.

She drew near and asked one of them whose grave it was. The child answered that that was not its name; it was a garden—his brother's. It was greener, he said, than all the other gardens, and the birds loved it better because he had been used to feed them. When he had done speaking, he looked at her with a smile, and kneeling down and nestling for a moment with his cheek against the turf, bounded merrily away.

She passed the church, gazing upward at its old tower, went through the wicket-gate, and so into the village. The old sexton, leaning on a crutch, was taking the air at his cottage door, and gave her good morrow.

"You are better!" said the child, stopping to speak with him.

"Ay, surely," returned the old man. "I'm thankful to say, much better."

"You will be quite well, soon."

"With Heaven's leave, and a little patience. But come in, come in."

The old man limped on before, and warning her of the downward step, which he achieved himself with no small difficulty, led the way into his little cottage.

"It is but one room you see. There is another up above, but the stair has got harder to climb o' late years, and I never use it I'm thinking of taking to it again next summer though."

The child wondered how a grey-headed man like him—one of his trade too—could talk of time so easily. He saw her eyes wandering to the tools that hung upon the wall, and smiled.

"I warrant now," he said, "that you think all those are used in making graves."

"Indeed, I wondered that you wanted so many."

"And well you might. I am a gardener. I dig the ground, and plant things that are to live and grow. My works don't all moulder away and rot in the earth. You see that spade in the centre?"

"The very old one—so notched and worn? Yes."

"That's the sexton's spade, and it's a well-used one, as you see. We're healthy people here, but it has done a power of work. If it could speak now, that spade, it would tell you of many an unexpected job that it and I have done together; but I forget 'em, for my memory's a poor one. That's nothing new," he added hastily. "It always was."

"There are flowers and shrubs to speak to your other work," said the child.

"Oh yes. And tall trees. But they are not so separated from the sexton's labours as you think."

"No!"

"Not in my mind, and recollection—such as it is," said the old man. "Indeed they often keep it. For say that I planted such a tree for such a man. There it stands to remind me that he died. When I look at its broad shadow, and remember what it was in his time, it keeps me to the age of my other work, and I can tell you pretty nearly when I made his grave."

"But it may remind you of one who is still alive," said the child.

"Of twenty that are dead, in connexion with that one who lives, then," rejoined the old man; "wife, husband, parents, brothers, sisters, children, friends—a score at least. So it happens that the sexton's spade gets worn and battered. I shall need a new one—next summer."

The child looked quickly towards him, thinking that he jested with his age and infirmity: but the unconscious sexton was quite in earnest.

"Ah!" he said, after a brief silence. "People never learn. They never learn. It's only we who turn up the ground, where nothing grows and everything decays, who think of such things as these—who think of them properly, I mean. You have been into the church?"

"I am going there now," the child replied.

"There's an old well there," said the sexton, "right underneath the belfry; a deep, dark, echoing well. Forty year ago, you had only to let down the bucket till the first knot in the rope was free of the windlass, and you heard it splashing in the cold dull water. By little and little the water fell away, so that in ten years after that, a second knot was made, and you must unwind so much rope, or the bucket swung tight and empty at the end. In ten years' time, the water fell again, and a third knot was made. In ten years more the well

dried up; and now, if you lower the bucket till your arms are tired and let out nearly all the cord, you'll hear it of a sudden clanking and rattling on the ground below, with a sound of being so deep and so far down, that your heart leaps into your mouth, and you start away as if you were falling in."

"A dreadful place to come on in the dark!" exclaimed the child, who had followed the old man's looks and words until she seemed to stand upon its brink.

"What is it but a grave!" said the sexton. "What else! And which of our old folks, knowing all this, thought, as the spring subsided, of their own failing strength, and lessening life! Not one!"

"Are you very old yourself?" asked the child, involuntarily.

"I shall be eighty-five—next summer."

"You still work when you are well?"

"Work! To be sure. You shall see my gardens hereabout. Look at the window there. I made, and have kept, that plot of ground entirely with my own hands. By this time next year I shall hardly see the sky; the boughs will have grown so thick. I have my winter work at night besides."

He opened, as he spoke, a cupboard close to where he sat, and produced some miniature boxes, carved in a homely manner and made of old wood.

"Some gentlefolks who are fond of ancient days, and what belongs to them," he said, "like to buy these keepsakes from our church and ruins. Sometimes I make them of scraps of oak, that turn up here and there; sometimes of bits of coffins, which the vaults have long preserved. See here—this is a little chest of the last kind, clasped at the edges with fragments of brass plates that had writing on 'em once, though it would be hard to read it now. I haven't many by me at this time of year, but these shelves will be full, next summer."

The child admired and praised his work, and shortly afterwards departed; thinking as she went how strange it was, that this old man, drawing from his pursuits, and everything around him, one stern moral, never contemplated its application to himself; and, while he dwelt upon the uncertainty of human life, seemed both in word and deed to deem himself immortal. But her musings did not stop here, for she was wise enough to think that by a good and merciful adjustment this must be human nature, and that the old sexton, with his plans for next summer, was but a type of all mankind.

Full of these meditations she reached the church. It was easy to find the key belonging to the outer door, for each was labelled on a scrap of yellow parchment Its very turning in the lock awoke a hollow sound, and when she entered with a faltering step, the echoes that it raised in closing, made her start.

Everything in our lives, whether of good or evil, affects us most by contrast. If the peace of the simple village had moved the child more strongly, because of the dark and troubled ways that lay beyond and through which she had journeyed with such failing feet, what was the deep impression of finding herself alone in that solemn building; where, the very light, coming through sunken windows, seemed old and grey; and the air, redolent of earth and mould, seemed laden with decay purified by time of all its grosser atoms, and sighed through arch and aisle, and clustered pillars, like the breath of ages gone! Here was the broken pavement, worn so long ago by pious feet, that Time, stealing on the pilgrims' steps, had trodden out their track, and left but crumbling stones. Here were the rotten beam, the sinking arch, the sapped and mouldering wall, the lowly trench of earth, the stately tomb on which no epitaph remained,—all,—marble, stone, iron, wood, and dust, one common monument of ruin. The best work and the worst, the plainest and the richest, the stateliest and the least imposing—both of Heaven's work and Man's, all found one common level here, and told one common tale.

Some part of the edifice had been a baronial chapel, and here were effigies of warriors stretched upon their beds of stone with folded hands, cross-legged—those who had fought in the Holy Wars—girded with their swords, and cased in armour as they had lived. Some of these knights had their own weapons, helmets, coats of mail, hanging upon the walls hard by, and dangling from rusty hooks. Broken and dilapidated as they were, they yet retained their ancient form, and something of their ancient aspect. Thus violent deeds live after men upon the earth, and traces of war and bloodshed will survive in mournful shapes, long after those who worked the desolation are but atoms of earth themselves. The child sat down in this old, silent place—the stark figures on the tombs made it more quiet there than elsewhere, to her fancy—and, gazing around with a feeling of awe, tempered with a calm delight, felt that now she was happy, and at rest. She took a bible from the shelf, and read; then laying it down, thought of the summer days and the bright spring-time that would come—of the rays of sun that would fall in aslant upon the sleeping forms—of the leaves that would flutter at the window, and play in glistening shadows

on the pavement—of the songs of birds, and growth of buds and blossoms out of doors—of the sweet air, that would steal in and gently wave the tattered banners overhead. What if the spot awakened thoughts of death! Die who would, it would still remain the same; these sights and sounds would still go on, as happily as ever. It would be no pain to sleep amidst them.

She left the chapel—very slowly and often turning back to gaze again—and coming to a low door, which led into the tower, opened it, and climbed the winding stair in darkness; save where she looked down through narrow loopholes on the place she had left, or caught a glimmering vision of the dusty bells. At length she gained the end of the ascent and stood upon the turret-top.—

Oh! the glory of the sudden burst of light; the freshness of the fields and woods, stretching away on every side and meeting the bright blue sky; the cattle grazing in the pasturage; the smoke, that coming from among the trees, seemed to rise upward from the green earth; the children yet at their gambols down below—all, everything so beautiful and happy. It was like passing from death to life; it was drawing nearer to Heaven. Who will wonder that the child looked round and wept!

The children were gone by the time she emerged into the porch, and locked the door. As she passed the school-house she could hear the busy hum of voices. Her friend had begun his labours only that day. The noise grew louder, and, looking back, she saw the boys come trooping out, and disperse themselves with merry shouts and play. "It's a good thing," thought the child, "I am very glad they pass the church." And then she stopped, to fancy how the noise would sound inside, and how gently it would seem to die away upon the ear.

Again that day, yes, twice again, she stole back to the old chapel, and in her former seat read from the same book, or indulged the same quiet train of thought. Even when it had grown dusk, and the shadows of coming night made it more solemn still, the child remained like one rooted to the spot, and had no fear or thought of stirring.

They found her there at last, and took her home. She looked pale, but very happy, until they separated for the night; and then as the poor schoolmaster stooped down to kiss her cheek, he felt a tear upon his lips.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-FOURTH.

The bachelor, among his various occupations, found in the old church a constant source of interest and amusement. Taking that pride in it which men conceive for the wonders of their own little world, he had made its history his study; and many a summer day within its walls, and many a winter's night beside the parsonage fire, had found the bachelor still poring over and adding to his goodly store of tale and legend.

As he was not one of those rough spirits who would strip fair Truth of every little shadowy vestment in which time and teeming fancies love to array her — and some of which become her pleasantly enough, serving, like the waters of her well, to add new graces to the charms they half conceal and half suggest, and to awaken interest and pursuit rather than languor and indifference — as, unlike this stern and obdurate class, he loved to see the goddess crowned with those garlands of wild flowers which tradition weaves for her gentle wearing, and which are often freshest in their homeliest shapes, — he trod with a light step and bore with a light hand upon the dust of centuries, unwilling to demolish any of the airy shrines that had been raised above it, if one good feeling or affection of the human heart were hiding thereabouts. Thus, in the case of an ancient coffin of rough stone, supposed for many generations to contain the bones of a certain baron, who, after ravaging, with cut, and thrust, and plunder, in foreign lands, came back with a penitent and sorrowing heart to die at home, but which had been lately shown by learned antiquaries to be no such thing, as the baron in question (so they contended) had died hard in battle, gnashing his teeth, and cursing with his latest breath, — the bachelor stoutly maintained that the old tale was the true one; that the baron, repenting him of the evil, had done great charities, and meekly given up the ghost; and that if ever baron went to heaven, that baron was then at peace. In like manner, when the aforesaid antiquaries did argue and contend that a certain secret vault was not the tomb of a grey-haired lady who had been hanged and drawn and quartered by glorious Queen Bess for succouring a wretched priest who fainted of thirst and hunger at her door, the bachelor did solemnly maintain against all comers that the church was hallowed by the said poor lady's ashes; that her remains had been collected in the night from four of the city's gates, and thither in secret brought, and there deposited: and the bachelor did further (being highly excited at such times) deny the glory of Queen Bess, and assert the immeasurably greater glory of the meanest woman in her realm who had a merciful and tender heart. As to the assertion that the flat stone near the door was not the grave of the miser who had disowned his only child and left a sum of money to the church to buy a peal of bells, the bachelor did readily admit the same, and that the place had given birth to no such man. In a word, he would have every stone and plate of brass, the monument only of deeds whose memory should survive. All others he was willing to forget. They might be buried in consecrated ground, but he would have them buried deep, and never brought to light again.

It was from the lips of such a tutor, that the child learnt her easy task. Already impressed, beyond all telling, by the silent building and the peaceful beauty of the spot in which it stood — majestic age surrounded by perpetual youth—it seemed to her when she heard these things, sacred to all goodness and virtue. It was another world, where sin and sorrow never came; a tranquil place of rest, where nothing evil entered.

When the bachelor had given her in connexion with almost every tomb and flat grave-stone some history of its own, he took her down into the old crypt, now a mere dull vault, and showed her how it had been lighted up in the time of the monks, and how, amid lamps depending from the roof, and swinging censers exhaling scented odours, and habits glittering with gold and silver, and pictures, and precious stuffs, and jewels, all flashing and glistening through the low arches, the chaunt of aged voices had been many a time heard there at midnight in old days, while hooded figures knelt and prayed around, and told their rosaries of beads. Thence, he took her above ground again, and showed her, high up in the old walls, small galleries; where the nuns had been wont to glide along — dimly seen in their dark dresses so far off — or to pause like

gloomy shadows, listening to the prayers. He showed her, too, how the warriors, whose figures rested on the tombs, had worn those rotting scraps of armour up above — how this had been a helmet, and that a shield, and that a gauntlet — and how they had wielded the great two-handed swords, and beaten down men with yonder mace. All that he told the child she treasured in her mind; and sometimes, when she woke at night from dreams of those old times, and rising from her bed looked out at the dark church, she almost hoped to see the windows lighted up, and hear the organ's swell, and sound of voices on the rushing wind.

The old sexton soon got better, and was about again. From him the child learnt many other things, though of a different kind. He was not able to work, but one day there was a grave to be made, and he came to overlook the man who dug it. He was in a talkative mood; and the child, at first standing by his side, and afterwards sitting on the grass at his feet, with her thoughtful face raised towards his, began to converse with him.

Now the man who did the sexton's duty was a little older than he, though much more active. But he was deaf; and when the sexton (who peradventure, on a pinch, might have walked a mile with great difficulty in half-a-dozen hours) exchanged a remark with him about his work, the child could not help noticing that he did so with an impatient kind of pity for his infirmity, as if he were himself the strongest and heartiest man alive.

"I'm sorry to see there is this to do," said the child, when she approached, "I heard of no one having died."

"She lived in another hamlet, my dear," returned the sexton. "Three mile away."

"Was she young?"

"Ye—yes," said the sexton; "not more than sixty-four, I think. David, was she more than sixty-four?"

David, who was digging hard, heard nothing of the question. The sexton, as he could not reach to touch him with his crutch, and was too infirm to rise without assistance, called his attention by throwing a little mould upon his red nightcap.

"What's the matter now?" said David, looking up.

"How old was Becky Morgan?" asked the sexton.

"Becky Morgan?" repeated David.

"Yes," replied the sexton; adding in a half compassionate, half irritable tone, which the old man couldn't hear, 'you're getting very deaf, Davy, very deaf to be sure."

The old man stopped in his work, and cleansing his spade with a piece of slate he had by him for the purpose—and scraping off, in the process, the essence of Heaven knows how many Becky Morgans — set himself to consider the subject.

"Let me think," quoth he. "I saw last night what they had put upon the coffin—was it seventy-nine?"

"No, no," said the sexton.

"Ah yes, it was though," returned the old man, with a sigh. "For I remember thinking she was very near our age. Yes, it was seventy-nine."

"Are you sure you didn't mistake a figure, Davy?" asked the sexton, with signs of some emotion.

"What?" said the old man. "Say that again."

"He's very deaf. He's very deaf indeed," cried the sexton, petulantly; "are you sure you're right about the figures?"

"Oh quite," replied the old man. "Why not?"

"He's exceedingly deaf," muttered the sexton to himself. "I think he's getting foolish."

The child rather wondered what had led him to this belief, as to say the truth the old man seemed quite as sharp as he, and was infinitely more robust. As the sexton said nothing more just then, however, she forgot it for the time, and spoke again.

"You were telling me," she said, "about your gardening. Do you ever plant things here?"

"In the churchyard?" returned the sexton. "Not I."

"I have seen some flowers and little shrubs about," the child rejoined; "there are some over there, you see. I thought they were of your rearing, though indeed they grow but poorly."

"They grow as Heaven wills," said the old man; "and it kindly ordains that they shall never flourish here."

"I do not understand you."

"Why, this it is," said the sexton. "They mark the graves of those who had very tender, loving friends."

"I was sure they did!" the child exclaimed. "I am very glad to know they do!"

"Ay," returned the old man, "but stay. Look at them. See how they hang their heads, and droop, and wither. Do you guess the reason?"

"No," the child replied.

"Because the memory of those who lie below, passes away so soon. At first they tend them, morning, noon, and night; they soon begin to come less frequently; from once a day, to once a week; from once a

week to once a month; then at long and uncertain intervals; then, not at all. Such tokens seldom flourish long. I have known the briefest summer flowers outlive them."

"I grieve to hear it," said the child.

"Ah! so say the gentlefolks who come down here to look about them," returned the old man, shaking his head, "but I say otherwise. 'It's a pretty custom you have in this part of the country,' they say to me sometimes, 'to plant the graves, but it's melancholy to see these things all withering or dead.' I crave their pardon and tell them that, as I take it, 't is a good sign for the happiness of the living. And so it is. It's nature."

"Perhaps the mourners learn to look to the blue sky by day, and to the stars by night; and to think that the dead are there, and not in graves," said the child in an earnest voice.

"Perhaps so," replied the old man doubtfully. "It may be."

"Whether it be as I believe it is, or no," thought the child within herself, "I'll make this place my garden. It will be no harm at least to work here day by day; and pleasant thoughts will come of it, I am sure."

Her glowing cheek and moistened eye passed unnoticed by the sexton, who turned towards old David, and called him by his name. It was plain that Becky Morgan's age still troubled him, though why, the child could scarcely understand.

The second or third repetition of his name attracted the old man's attention. Pausing from his work, he leant upon his spade, and put his hand to his dull ear.

"Did you call?" he said.

"I have been thinking, Davy," replied the sexton, "that she," he pointed to the grave, "must have been a deal older than you or me."

"Seventy-nine," answered the old man with a sorrowful shake of the head, "I tell you that I saw it."

"Saw it!" replied the sexton; "ay, but, Davy, women don't always tell the truth about their age."

"That's true indeed," said the other old man, with a sudden sparkle in his eye. "She might have been older."

"I'm sure she must have been. Why, only think how old she looked. You and I seemed but boys to her."

"She did look old," rejoined David. "You're right. She did look old."

"Call to mind how old she looked for many a long, long year, and say if she could be but seventy-nine at last—only our age," said the sexton.

"Five year older at the very least!" cried the other.

"Five!" retorted the sexton. "Ten. Good eighty-nine. I call to mind the time her daughter died. She was eighty-nine if she was a day, and tries to pass upon us now, for ten year younger. Oh! human vanity!"

The other old man was not behind-hand with some moral reflections on this fruitful theme, and both adduced a mass of evidence; of such weight as to render it doubtful—not whether the deceased was of the age suggested, but whether she had not almost reached the patriarchal term of a hundred. When they had settled this question to their mutual satisfaction, the sexton, with his friend's assistance, rose to go.

"It's chilly, sitting here, and I must be careful—till the summer," he said, as he prepared to limp away.

"What?" asked old David.

"He's very deaf, poor fellow!" cried the sexton. "Good bye."

"Ah!" said old David, looking after him "He's failing very fast. He ages every day."

And so they parted: each persuaded that the other had less life in him than himself; and both greatly consoled and comforted by the little fiction they had agreed upon, respecting Becky Morgan; whose decease was no longer a precedent of uncomfortable application, and would be no business of theirs for half-a-score of years to come.

The child remained for some minutes, watching the deaf old man as he threw out the earth with his shovel, and, often stopping to cough and fetch his breath, still muttered to himself, with a kind of sober chuckle, that the sexton was wearing fast. At length she turned away, and walking thoughtfully through the churchyard, came unexpectedly upon the schoolmaster, who was sitting on a green grave in the sun, reading.

"Nell here?" he said cheerfully, as he closed his book. "It does me good to see you in the air and light. I feared you were again in the church, where you so often are."

"Feared!" replied the child, sitting down beside him. "Is it not a good place?"

"Yes, yes," said the schoolmaster. "But you must be gay sometimes—nay, don't shake your head and smile so very sadly."

"Not sadly, if you knew my heart. Do not look at me as if you thought me sorrowful. There is not a happier creature on the earth than I am now."

Full of grateful tenderness, the child took his hand, and folded it between her own. "It's God's will!" she said, when they had been silent for some time.

"What?"

"All this," she rejoined; "all this about us. But which of us is sad now? You see that *I* am smiling."

"And so am I," said the schoolmaster; "smiling to think how often we shall laugh in this same place. Were you not talking yonder?"

"Yes," the child rejoined.

"Of something that has made you sorrowful?"

There was a long pause. "What was it?" said the schoolmaster, tenderly. "Come. Tell me what it was."

"I rather grieve—I *do* rather grieve to think," said the child, bursting into tears, "that those who die about us, are so soon forgotten."

"And do you think," said the schoolmaster, marking the glance she had thrown around, "that an unvisited grave, a withered tree, a faded flower or two, are tokens of forgetfulness or cold neglect? Do you think there are no deeds far away from here, in which these dead may be best remembered? Nell, Nell, there may be people busy in the world at this instant, in whose good actions and good thoughts these very graves—neglected as they look to us—are the chief instruments."

"Tell me no more," said the child quickly. "Tell me no more. I feel, I know it. How could *I* be unmindful of it, when I thought of you?"

"There is nothing," cried her friend, "no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten. Let us hold to that faith, or none. An infant, a prattling child, dying in its cradle, will live again in the better thoughts of those who loved it; and play its part, through them, in the redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes or drowned in the deepest sea. There is not an angel added to the Host of Heaven but does its blessed work on earth in those that loved it here. Forgotten! oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautifully would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection, would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves!"

"Yes," said the child, "it is the truth; I know it is. Who should feel its force so much as I, in whom your little scholar lives again! Dear, dear, good friend, if you knew the comfort you have given me."

The poor schoolmaster made her no answer, but bent over her in silence; for his heart was full.

They were yet seated in the same place, when the grandfather approached. Before they had spoken many words together, the church clock struck the hour of school, and their friend withdrew.

"A good man," said the grandfather, looking after him; "a kind man. Surely *he* will never harm us, Nell. We are safe here, at last—eh? We will never go away from here?"

The child shook her head, and smiled.

"She needs rest," said the old man, patting her cheek; "too pale—too pale. She is not like what she was!"

"When?" asked the child.

"Ha!" said the old man, "to be sure—when? How many weeks ago? Could I count them on my fingers? Let them rest though; they're better gone."

"Much better, dear," replied the child. "We will forget them; or, if we ever call them to mind, it shall be only as some uneasy dream that has passed away."

"Hush!" said the old man, motioning hastily to her with his hand and looking over his shoulder; "no more talk of the dream, and all the miseries it brought. There are no dreams here. 'T is a quiet place, and they keep away. Let us never think about them, lest they should pursue us again. Sunken eyes and hollow cheeks—wet, cold, and famine—and horrors before them all, that were even worse—we must forget such things if we would be tranquil here."

"Thank Heaven!" inwardly exclaimed the child, "for this most happy change!"

"I will be patient," said the old man, "humble, very thankful, and obedient, if you will let me stay. But do not hide from me; do not steal away alone; let me keep beside you. Indeed, I will be very true, and faithful, Nell."

"I steal away alone! why that," replied the child, with assumed gaiety, "would be a pleasant jest indeed. See here, dear grandfather, we'll make this place our garden—why not? It's a very good one—and to-morrow we'll begin, and work together, side by side."

"It's a brave thought!" cried her grandfather. "Mind, darling—we begin to-morrow!"

Who so delighted as the old man, when they next day began their labour! Who so unconscious of all associations connected with the spot, as he! They plucked the long grass and nettles from the tombs, thinned the poor shrubs and roots, made the turf smooth, and cleared it of the leaves and weeds. They were yet in the ardour of their work, when the child, raising her head from the ground over which she bent, observed that the bachelor was sitting on the stile close by, watching them in silence.

"A kind office," said the little gentleman, nodding to Nell as she curtseyed to him. "Have you done all that this morning?"

"It is very little, sir," returned the child, with downcast eyes, "to what we mean to do."

"Good work, good work," said the bachelor. "But do you only labour at the graves of children and young people?"

"We shall come to the others in good time, sir," replied Nell, turning her head aside, and speaking softly.

It was a slight incident, and might have been design, or accident, or the child's unconscious sympathy with youth. But it seemed to strike upon her grandfather, though he had not noticed it before. He looked in a hurried manner at the graves, then anxiously at the child, then pressed her to his side, and bade her stop to rest. Something he had long forgotten, appeared to struggle faintly in his mind. It did not pass away, as weightier things had done; but came uppermost again, and yet again, and many times that day, and often afterwards. Once, while they were yet at work, the child, seeing that he often turned and looked uneasily at her, as though he were trying to resolve some painful doubts or collect some scattered thoughts, urged him to tell the reason. But he said it was nothing — nothing — and, laying her head upon his arm, patted her fair cheek with his hand, and muttered that she grew stronger every day, and would be a woman, soon.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-FIFTH.

From that time there sprung up in the old man's mind, a solicitude about the child which never slept or left him. There are chords in the human heart — strange, varying things — which are only struck by accident; which will remain mute and senseless to appeals the most passionate and earnest, and respond at last to the slightest casual touch. — In the most insensible or childish minds, there is some train of reflection which art can seldom lead, or skill assist, but which will revea-

itself, as great truths have done, by chance, and when the discoverer has the plainest and simplest end in view. From that time, the old man never for a moment forgot the weakness and devotion of the child: from the time of that slight incident, he, who had seen her toiling by his side through so much difficulty and suffering, and had scarcely thought of her otherwise than as the partner of miseries which he felt severely in his own person, and deplored for his own sake at least as much as hers, awoke to a sense of what he owed her, and what those miseries had made her. Never, no, never once, in one unguarded moment from that time to the end, did any care for himself, any thought of his own comfort, any selfish consideration or regard, distract his thoughts from the gentle object of his love.

He would follow her up and down, waiting till she should tire and lean upon his arm—he would sit opposite to her in the chimney-corner, content to watch, and look, until she raised her head and smiled upon him as of old—he would discharge, by stealth, those household duties which tasked her powers too heavily—he would rise, in the cold dark nights, to listen to her breathing in her sleep, and sometimes crouch for hours by her bedside only to touch her hand. He who knows all, can only know what hopes, and fears, and thoughts of deep affection, were in that one disordered brain, and what a change had fallen upon the poor old man.

Sometimes—weeks had crept on then—the child, exhausted, though with little fatigue, would pass whole evenings on a couch beside the fire. At such times, the schoolmaster would bring in books, and read to her aloud; and seldom an evening passed, but the bachelor came in, and took his turn of reading. The old man sat and listened,—with little understanding for the words, but with his eyes fixed upon the child,—and if she smiled or brightened with the story, he would say it was a good one, and conceive a fondness for the very book. When, in their evening talk, the bachelor told some tale that pleased her (as his tales were sure to do), the old man would painfully try to store it in his mind; nay, when the bachelor left them, he would sometimes slip out after him, and humbly beg that he would tell him such a part again, that he might learn to win a smile from Nell.

But these were rare occasions, happily; for the child yearned to be out of doors, and walking in her solemn garden. Parties, too, would come to see the church; and those who came, speaking to others of the child, sent more; so that even at that season of the year they had visiters almost daily. The old man would follow them at a little distance through the building, listening to the voice he loved so well; and when the strangers left, and parted from Nell, he would mingle with them to catch up fragments of their conversation; or he would stand for the same purpose, with his grey head uncovered, at the gate, as they passed through. They always praised the child, her sense and beauty, and he was proud to hear them! But what was that, so often added, which wrung his heart, and made him sob and weep alone, in some dull corner? Alas! even careless strangers—they who had no feeling for her, but the interest of the moment—they who would go away and forget next week that such a being lived—even they saw it—even they pitied her—even they bade him good day compassionately, and whispered as they passed.

The people of the village, too, of whom there was not one but grew to have a fondness for poor Nell; even among them, there was the same feeling; a tenderness towards her—a compassionate regard for her, increasing every day. The very schoolboys, light-hearted and thoughtless as they were, even they cared for her. The roughest among them was sorry if he missed her in the usual place upon his way to school, and would turn out of the path to ask for her at the latticed window. If she were sitting in the church, they perhaps might peep in softly at the open door; but they never spoke to her, unless she rose and went to speak to them. Some feeling was abroad which raised the child above them all.

So, when Sunday came. They were all poor country people in the church, for the castle in which the old family had lived, was an empty ruin, and there were none but humble folks for seven miles around. There, as elsewhere, they had an interest in Nell. They would gather round her in the porch, before and after service; young children would cluster at her skirts; and aged men and women forsake their gossips, to give her kindly greeting. None of them, young or old, thought of passing the child without a friendly word. Many who came from three or four miles distant, brought her little presents; the humblest and rudest had good wishes to bestow.

She had sought out the young children whom she first saw playing in the churchyard. One of these—he who had spoken of his brother—was her little favourite and friend, and often sat by her side in the church, or climbed with her to the tower-

.op. It was his delight to help her, or to fancy that he did so, and they soon became close companions.

It happened, that, as she was reading in the old spot by herself one day, this child came running in with his eyes full of tears, and after holding her from him and looking at her eagerly for a moment, clasped his little arms passionately about her neck.

"What now?" said Nell, soothing him. "What is the matter?"

"She is not one yet!" cried the boy, embracing her still more closely. "No, no. Not yet."

She looked at him wonderingly, and putting his hair back from his face, and kissing nim, asked what he meant.

"You must not be one, dear Nell," cried the boy. "We can't see them. They never come to play with us, or talk to us. Be what you are. You are better so."

"I do not understand you," said the child. "Tell me what you mean."

"Why, they say," replied the boy, looking up into her face, "that you will be an angel, before the birds sing again. But you won't be, will you? Don't leave us, Nell, though the sky *is* bright. Do not leave us!"

The child drooped her head, and put her hands before her eyes.

"She cannot bear the thought!" cried the boy, exulting through his tears. "You will not go. You know how sorry we should be. Dear Nell, tell me that you'll stay amongst us. Oh! pray, pray, tell me that you will."

The little creature folded his hands, and knelt down at her feet.

"Only look at me, Nell," said the boy, "and tell me that you'll stop, and then I shall know that they are wrong, and will cry no more. Won't you say yes, Nell?"

Still the drooping head and hidden face, and the child quite silent—save for her sobs.

"After a time," pursued the boy, trying to draw away her hand, "the kind angels will be glad to think that you are not among them, and that you stayed here to be with us. Willy went away, to join them; but if he had known how I should miss him in our little bed at night, he never would have left me, I am sure."

Yet the child could make him no answer, and sobbed as though her heart were bursting.

"Why would you go, dear Nell? I know you would not be happy when you neard that we were crying for your loss. They say that Willy is in heaven now, and that it's always summer there, and yet I'm sure he grieves when I lie down upon nis garden bed, and he cannot turn to kiss me. But if you do go, Nell," said the boy, caressing her, and pressing his face to her's, "be fond of him, for my sake. Tell him how I love him still, and how much I loved you; and when I think that you two are together, and are happy, I'll try to bear it, and never give you pain by doing wrong,—indeed I never will!"

The child suffered him to move her hands, and put them round his neck. There was a tearful silence, but it was not long before she looked upon him with a smile, and promised him, in a very gentle quiet voice, that she would stay, and be his friend, as long as Heaven would let her. He clapped his hands for joy, and thanked her many times; and being charged to tell no person what had passed between them, gave her an earnest promise that he never would.

Nor did he, so far as the child could learn; but was her quiet companion in all her walks and musings, and never again adverted to the theme, which he felt had given her pain, although he was unconscious of its cause, something of distrust lingered about him still; for he would often come, even in the dark evenings, and call in a timid voice outside the door to know if she were safe within; and being answered yes, and bade to enter, would take his station on a low stool at her feet, and sit there patiently until they came to seek and take him home. Sure as the morning came, it found him lingering near the house to ask if she were well; and, morning, noon, or night, go where she would, he would forsake his playmates and his sports to bear her company.

"And a good little friend he is, too," said the old sexton to her once. "When his elder brother died,—elder seems a strange word, for he was only seven years old,—I remember this one took it sorely to heart."

The child thought of what the schoolmaster had told her, and felt how its truth was shadowed out even in this infant.

"It has given him something of a quiet way, I think," said the old man, "though for that, he is merry enough at times. I'd wager now, that you and he have been listening by the old well."

"Indeed we have not," the child replied. "I have been afraid to go near it; for I am not often down in that part of the church, and do not know the ground."

"Come down with me," said the old man. "I have known it from a boy. Come!"

They descended the narrow steps which led into the crypt, and paused among the gloomy arches, in a dim and murky spot.

"This is the place," said the old man. "Give me your hand while you throw back the cover, lest you should stumble and fall in. I am too old—I mean rheumatic—to stoop, myself."

"A black and dreadful place!" exclaimed the child.

"Look in," said the old man, pointing downward with his finger.

The child complied, and gazed down into the pit.

"It looks like a grave itself," said the old man."

"It does," replied the child.

"I have often had the fancy," said the sexton, "that it might have been dug at first to make the old place more gloomy, and the old monks more religious. It's to be closed up, and built over."

The child still stood, looking thoughtfully into the vault.

"We shall see," said the sexton, "on what gay heads other earth will have closed, when the light is shut out from here. God knows! They'll close it up, next spring."

"The birds sing again in spring," thought the child, as she leant at her casement window, and gazed at the declining sun. "Spring! a beautiful and happy time!"

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-SIXTH.

A DAY or two after the Quilp tea-party at the Wilderness, Mr. Swiveller walked into Sampson Brass's office at the usual hour, and being alone in that Temple of Probity, placed his hat upon the desk, and taking from his pocket a small parcel of black crape, applied himself to folding and pinning the same upon it, after the manner of a hatband. Having completed the construction of this appendage, he surveyed his work with great complacency, and put his hat on again—very much over one eye, to increase the mournfulness of the effect. These arrangements perfected to his entire satisfaction, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the office with measured steps.

"It has always been the same with me," said Mr. Swiveller, "always. 'Twas ever thus—from childhood's hour I 've seen my fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower, but 'twas the first to fade away. I never reared a young gazelle to glad me with its soft black eye, but when it came to know me well, and love me, it was sure to marry a market-gardener."

Overpowered by these reflections, Mr. Swiveller stopped short at the clients' chair, and flung himself into its open arms.

"And this," said Mr. Swiveller, with a kind of bantering composure, "is life, I believe. Oh, certainly. Why not! I'm quite satisfied, I shall wear," added Richard, taking off his hat again and looking hard at it as if he were only deterred by pecuniary considerations from spurning it with his foot, "I shall wear this emblem of woman's perfidy, in remembrance of her with whom I shall never again thread the windings of the mazy; whom I shall never more pledge in the rosy; who, during the short remainder of my existence, will murder the balmy. Ha, ha, ha!"

It may be necessary to observe, lest there should appear any incongruity in the close of this soliloquy, that Mr. Swiveller did not wind up with a cheerful hilarious laugh, which would have been undoubtedly at variance with his solemn reflections, but that, being in a theatrical mood, he merely achieved that performance which is designated in melo-dramas, "laughing like a fiend," for it seems that your fiends always laugh in syllables, and always in three syllables, never more nor less, which is a remarkable property in such gentry, and one worthy of remembrance.

The baleful sounds had hardly died away, and Mr. Swiveller was still sitting in a very grim state in the client's chair, when there came a ring—or, if we may adapt the sound to his then humour, a knell—at the office bell. Opening the door with all speed, he beheld the expressive countenance of Mr. Chuckster, between whom and himself, a fraternal greeting ensued.

"You 're devilish early at this pestiferous old slaughter-house," said that gentleman, poising himself on one leg, and shaking himself with the other.

"Rather," returned Dick.

"Rather!" retorted Mr. Chuckster, with that air of graceful trifling which so well became him. "*I* should think so. Why, my good feller, do you know what o'clock it is — half-past nine A. M., in the morning!"

"Won't you come in?" said Dick. "All alone. Swiveller solus. ''Tis now the witching—'"

"'Hour of night!'"

"'When churchyards yawn,'"

"'And graves give up their dead.'"

At the end of this quotation in dialogue, each gentleman struck an attitude, and immediately subsiding into prose walked into the office. Such morsels of enthusiasm were common among the Glorious Apollos, and were indeed the links that bound them together, and raised them above the dull cold earth.

"Well, and how are you, my buck?" said Mr. Chuckster, taking a stool. "I was forced to come into the city upon some little private matters of my own, and couldn't pass the corner of the street without looking in, but upon my soul I didn't expect to find you. It is so everlastingly early."

Mr. Swiveller expressed his acknowledgments; and it appearing on further conversation that he was in good health, and that Mr. Chuckster was in the like enviable condition, both gentlemen, in compliance with a solemn custom of the ancient brotherhood to which they belonged, joined in a fragment of the popular duet of "All's Well;" with a long shake at the end.

"And what 's the news?" said Richard.

"The town 's as flat, my dear feller," replied Mr. Chuckster, "as the surface of a Dutch oven. There 's no news. By

the-bye, that lodger of yours is a most extraordinary person. He quite eludes the most vigorous comprehension, you know. Never was such a feller!"

"What has he been doing now?" said Dick.

"By Jove, sir," returned Mr. Chuckster, taking out an oblong snuff-box, the lid whereof was ornamented with a fox 's head curiously carved in brass, "that man is an unfathomable. Sir, that man has made friends with our articled clerk. There 's no harm in him, but he is so amazingly slow and soft. Now, if he wanted a friend, why could n't he have one that knew a thing or two, and could do him some good by his manners and conversation. I have my faults, sir," said Mr. Chuckster—

"No, no," interposed Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh, yes I have, I have my faults, no man knows his faults better than I know mine. But," said Mr. Chuckster, "I 'm not meek. My worst enemies—every man has his enemies, sir, and I have mine—never accused me of being meek. And I tell you what, sir, if I had n't more of these qualities that commonly endear man to man, than our articled clerk has, I 'd steal a Cheshire cheese, tie it round my neck, and drown myself. I 'd die degraded, as I had lived. I would, upon my honour."

Mr. Chuckster paused, rapped the fox 's head exactly on the nose with the knuckle of the fore-finger, took a pinch of snuff, and looked steadily at Mr. Swiveller, as much as to say, that if he thought he was going to sneeze, he would find himself mistaken.

"Not contented, sir," said Mr. Chuckster, "with making friends with Abel, he has cultivated the acquaintance of his father and mother. Since he came home from that wild-goose chase, he has been there—actually been there. He patronizes young Snobby besides; yet I do n't suppose that beyond the common forms of civility, he has ever exchanged half-a-dozen words with *me*. Now, upon my soul, you know," said Mr. Chuckster, shaking his head gravely, as men are wont to do when they consider things are going a little too far, "this is altogether such a low-minded affair, that if I did n't feel for the governor, and know that he could never get on without me, I should be obliged to cut the connexion. I should have no alternative."

Mr. Swiveller, who sat on another stool opposite to his friend, stirred the fire in an excess of sympathy, but said nothing.

"As to young Snob, sir," pursued Mr. Chuckster with a prophetic look, "you 'll find he 'll turn out bad. In our profession we know something of human nature, and take my word for it, that the feller that came back to work out that shilling, will show himself one of these days in his true colours. He 's a low thief, sir. He must be."

Mr. Chuckster being roused, would probably have pursued this subject further, and in more emphatic language, but for a tap at the door, which seeming to announce the arrival of somebody on business, caused him to assume a greater appearance of meekness than was, perhaps, quite consistent with his late declaration. Mr. Swiveller, hearing the same sound, caused his stool to revolve rapidly on one leg, until it brought him to his desk, into which, having forgotten in the sudden flurry of his spirits to part with the poker, he thrust it, as he cried "Come in!"

Who should present himself but that very Kit who had been the theme of Mr. Chuckster's wrath! Never did man pluck up his courage so quickly, or look so fierce, as Mr. Chuckster, when he found it was he. Mr. Swiveller stared at him for a moment, and then leaping from his stool, and drawing out the poker from its place of concealment, performed the broad-sword exercise with all the cuts and guards complete, in a species of frenzy.

"Is the gentleman at home?" said Kit, rather astonished by this uncommon reception.

Before Mr. Swiveller could make any reply, Mr. Chuckster took occasion to enter his indignant protest against this form of inquiry; which he held to be of a disrespectful and snobbish tendency, inasmuch as the inquirer, seeing two gentlemen then and there present, should have spoken of the other gentleman; or rather (for it was not impossible that the object of his search might be of inferior quality) should have mentioned his name, leaving it to his hearers to determine his degree as they thought proper. Mr. Chuckster further remarked, that he had some reason to believe this form of address was personal to himself, and that he was not a man to be trifled with, as certain snobs (whom he did not more particularly mention or describe) might find to their cost.

"I mean the gentleman up stairs," said Kit, turning to Richard Swiveller. "Is he at home?"

"Why?" rejoined Dick.

"Because if he is, I have a letter for him."

"From whom?" said Dick.

"From Mr. Garland."

"Oh!" said Dick, with extreme politeness. "Then you may hand it over, sir. And if you 're to wait for an answer, sir, you may wait in the passage, sir, which is an airy and well-ventilated apartment, sir."

"Thank you," returned Kit. "But I am to give it to himself, if you please."

The excessive audacity of this retort so overpowered Mr. Chuckster, and so moved his tender regard for his friend's honour, that he declared, if he were not restrained by official considerations, he must certainly have annihilated Kit upon the spot; a resentment of the affront which he did consider, under the extraordinary circumstances of aggravation attending it, could not but have met with the proper sanction and approval of a jury of Englishmen, who, he had no doubt, would have returned a verdict of justifiable homicide, coupled with a high testimony to the morals and character of the Avenger. Mr. Swiveller, without being quite so hot upon the matter, was rather shamed by his friend's excitement, and not a little puzzled how to act (Kit being quite cool and good humoured,) when the single gentleman was heard to call violently down stairs.

"Didn't I see somebody for me, come in?" cried the lodger.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "Certainly, sir."

"Then where is he?" roared the single gentleman.

"He's here, sir," rejoined Mr. Swiveller. "Now young man, don't you hear you're to go up-stairs? Are you deaf?"

Kit did not appear to think it worth his while to enter into any further altercation, but hurried off and left the Glorious Apollos gazing at each other in silence.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Mr. Chuckster. "What do you think of that?"

Mr. Swiveller being in the main a good-natured fellow, and not perceiving in the conduct of Kit any villany of enormous magnitude, scarcely knew what answer to return. He was relieved from his perplexity, however, by the entrance of Mr. Sampson and his sister Sally, at sight of whom Mr. Chuckster precipitately retired.

Mr. Brass and his lovely companion appeared to have been holding a consultation over their temperate breakfast, upon some matter of great interest and importance. On the occasion of such conferences, they generally appeared in the office some half an hour after their usual time, and in a very smiling state, as though their late plots and designs had tranquillised their minds and shed a light upon their toilsome way. In the present instance, they seemed particularly gay; Miss Sally's aspect being

of a most oily kind, and Mr. Brass rubbing his hands in an exceedingly jocose and light-hearted manner.

"Well, Mr. Richard," said Brass.—"How are we this morning? Are we pretty fresh and cheerful, sir—eh, Mr. Richard?"

"Pretty well, sir," replied Dick.

"That's well," said Brass. "Ha ha! We should be gay as larks Mr. Richard—why not? It's a pleasant world we live in, sir, a very pleasant world. There are bad people in it Mr. Richard, but if there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers. Ha ha! Any letters by the post this morning, Mr. Richard?"

Mr. Swiveller answered in the negative.

"Ha!" said Brass, "no matter. If there's little business to-day, there'll be more to-morrow. A contented spirit, Mr. Richard, is the sweetness of existence. Anybody been here, sir?"

"Only my friend," replied Dick. "May we ne'er want a—"

"Friend," Brass chimed in quickly, "or a bottle to give him. Ha ha! That's the way the song runs, isn't it? A very good song, Mr. Richard, very good. I like the sentiment of it. Ha ha! Your friend's the young man from Witherden's office I think—yes—May we ne'er want a—nobody else at all, been here, Mr. Richard?"

"Only somebody to the lodger," replied Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh indeed!" cried Brass. "Somebody to the lodger, eh? Ha ha! May we ne'er want a friend, or a—somebody to the lodger, eh Mr. Richard?"

"Yes," said Dick, a little disconcerted by the excessive buoyancy of spirits which his employer displayed. "With him now."

"With him now!" cried Brass; "Ha ha! There let 'em be, merry and free, toor rul lol le. Eh, Mr. Richard? Ha ha!"

"Oh certainly," replied Dick.

"And who," said Brass, shuffling among his papers, "who is the lodger's visiter—not a lady visiter I hope, eh Mr. Richard? The morals of the Marks you know sir—'when lovely woman stoops to folly"—and all that—eh Mr. Richard?"

"Another young man, who belongs to Witherden's too, or half belongs there," returned Richard. "Kit, they call him."

"Kit, eh!" said Brass. "Strange name—name of a dancing-master's fiddle, eh Mr. Richard? Ha ha! Kit's there, is he? oh!"

Dick looked at Miss Sally, wondering that she didn't check this uncommon exuberance on the part of Mr. Sampson, but as she made no attempt to do so, and rather appeared to exhibit a tacit acquiescence in it, he concluded that they had just been cheating somebody, and receiving the bill.

"Will you have the goodness, Mr. Richard," said Brass, taking a letter from his desk, "just to step over to Peckham Rye with that! There's no answer, but it's rather particular and should go by hand. Charge the office with your coach-hire back, you know; don't spare the office; get as much out of it as you can—clerk's motto—Eh Mr. Richard? Ha ha!"

Mr. Swiveller solemnly doffed the aquatic jacket, put on his coat, took down his hat from its peg, pocketed the letter, and departed. Directly he was gone, uprose Miss Sally Brass, and smiling sweetly at her brother (who nodded and smote his nose in return) withdrew also.

Sampson Brass was no sooner left alone, than he set the office door wide open, and establishing himself at his desk directly opposite, so that he could not fail to see anybody who came down-stairs and passed out at the street door, began to write with extreme cheerfulness and assiduity; humming as he did so, in a voice that was anything but musical, certain vocal snatches which appeared to have reference to the union between Church and State, inasmuch as they were compounded of the Evening Hymn and God save the King.

Thus, the attorney of Bevis Marks sat, and wrote, and hummed, for a long time, except when he stopped to listen with a very cunning face, and hearing nothing, went on humming louder, and writing slower than ever. At length, in one of these pauses, he heard his lodger's door opened and shut, and footsteps coming down the stairs. Then Mr. Brass left off writing entirely, and with his pen in his hand hummed his very loudest; shaking his head meanwhile from side to side like a man whose whole soul was in the music, and smiling in a manner quite seraphic.

It was towards this moving spectacle that the staircase and the sweet sounds guided Kit, on whose arrival before his door, Mr. Brass stopped his singing, but not his smiling, and nodded affably, at the same time beckoning to him with his pen.

"Kit," said Mr. Brass, in the pleasantest way imaginable, "how do you do?"

Kit being rather shy of his friend, made a suitable reply, and had his hand upon the lock of the street door when Mr. Brass called him softly back.

"You are not to go, if you please, Kit," said the attorney in a mysterious and yet business-like way. "You are to step in here, if you please. Dear me, dear me! When I look at you," said the lawyer, quitting his stool, and standing before the

fire with his back towards it, "I am reminded of the sweetest little face that ever my eyes beheld. I remember your coming there twice or thrice when we were in possession. Ah, Kit, my dear fellow, gentlemen in my profession have such painful duties to perform sometimes, that you needn't envy us—you needn't, indeed!"

"I don't sir," said Kit, "though it isn't for the like of me to judge."

"Our only consolation, Kit," pursued the lawyer, looking at him in a sort of pensive abstraction, "is, that although we cannot turn away the wind, we can soften it; we can temper it, if I may so say, to the shorn lambs."

"Shorn indeed!" thought Kit. "Pretty close!" but he didn't say so.

"On that occasion, Kit," said Mr. Brass, "on that occasion that I have just alluded to, I had a hard battle with Mr. Quilp (for Mr. Quilp is a very hard man) to obtain them the indulgence they had. It might have cost me a client. But suffering virtue inspired me, and I prevailed."

"He's not so bad, after all," thought honest Kit, as the attorney pursed up his lips and looked like a man who was struggling with his better feelings.

"I respect *you*, Kit," said Brass with emotion. "I saw enough of your conduct at that time to respect you, though your station is humble, and your fortune lowly. It isn't the waistcoat that I look at. It is the heart. The checks in the waistcoat are but the wires of the cage. But the heart is the bird. Ah! How many sick birds are perpetually moulting, and putting their beaks through the wires to peck at all mankind!"

This poetic figure, which Kit took to be in special allusion to his own checked waistcoat, quite overcame him; Mr. Brass's voice and manner added not a little to its effect, for he discoursed with all the mild austerity of a hermit, and wanted but a cord round the waist of his rusty surtout, and a skull on the chimney-piece, to be completely set up in that line of business.

"Well, well," said Sampson, smiling as good men smile when they compassionate their own weakness or that of their fellow-creatures, "this is wide of the bull's eye. You're to take that, if you please." As he spoke, he pointed to a couple of half-crowns upon the desk.

Kit looked at the coins, and then at Sampson, and hesitated.

"For yourself," said Brass.

"From——"

"No matter about the person they came from," replied the lawyer. "Say me, if you like. We have eccentric friends overhead, Kit, and we mustn't ask questions or talk too much—you understand. You're to take them, that's all; and between you and me, I don't think they'll be the last you'll have to take from the same place. I hope not. Good bye, Kit. Good bye!"

With many thanks, and many self-reproaches for having on such slight grounds suspected one who in their very first conversation turned out such a different man from what he had supposed, Kit took the money and made the best of his way home. Mr. Brass remained airing himself at the fire; and resumed his vocal exercise, and his seraphic smile, simultaneously.

"May I come in?" said Miss Sally, peeping.

"Oh, yes, you may come in," returned her brother.

"Ahem?" coughed Miss Brass interrogatively.

"Yes," returned Sampson, "I should say as good as done."

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-SEVENTH.

Mr. Chuckster's indignant apprehensions were not without foundation. Certainly the friendship between the single gentleman and Mr. Garland was not suffered to cool, but had a rapid growth and flourished exceedingly. They were soon in habits of constant intercourse and communication; and the single gentleman labouring at this time under a slight attack of illness—the consequence most probably of his late excited feelings and subsequent disappointment—furnished a reason for their holding yet more frequent correspondence; so that some one of the inmates of Abel Cottage, Finchley, came backwards and forwards between that place and Bevis Marks almost every day.

As the pony had now thrown off all disguise, and without any mincing of the matter or beating about the bush, sturdily refused to be driven by anybody but Kit, it generally happened that whether old Mr.

Garland came, or Mr. Abel, Kit was of the party. Of all messages and inquiries, Kit was, in right of his position, the bearer; thus it came about that, while the single gentleman remained indisposed, Kit turned into Bevis Marks every morning with nearly as much regularity as the General Postman.

Mr. Sampson Brass, who no doubt had his reasons for looking sharply about him, soon learnt to distinguish the pony's trot and the clatter of the little chaise at the corner of the street. Whenever this sound reached his ears, he would immediately lay down his pen and fall to rubbing his hands, and exhibiting the greatest glee.

"Ha, ha!" he would cry. "Here's the pony again. Most remarkable pony, extremely docile, eh, Mr. Richard, eh, sir?"

Dick would return some matter of course reply, and Mr. Brass, standing on the bottom rail of his stool, so as to get a view of the street over the top of the window-blind, would take an observation of the visiters.

"The old gentleman again!" he would exclaim, "a very prepossessing old gentleman, Mr. Richard—charming countenance, sir—extremely calm—benevolence in every feature, sir. He quite realizes my idea of King Lear, as he appeared when in possession of his kingdom, Mr. Richard—the same good-humour, the same white hair and partial baldness, the same liability to be imposed upon. Ah! a sweet subject for contemplation, sir, very sweet!"

Then, Mr. Garland having alighted and gone up-stairs, Sampson would nod and smile to Kit from the window, and presently walk out into the street to greet him, when some such conversation as the following would ensue.

"Admirably groomed, Kit,"—Mr. Brass is patting the pony—"does you great credit—amazingly sleek and bright to be sure. He literally looks as if he had been varnished all over."

Kit touches his hat, smiles, pats the pony himself, and expresses his conviction, that Mr. Brass will not find many like him.

"A beautiful animal, indeed!" cries Brass. "Sagacious too!"

"Bless you!" replies Kit, "he knows what you say to him as well as a Christian does."

"Does he, indeed!" cries Brass, who has heard the same thing in the same place from the same person in the same words a dozen times, but is paralysed with astonishment, notwithstanding. "Dear me!"

"I little thought the first time I saw him, sir," says Kit, pleased with the attorney's strong interest in his favourite, "that I should come to be as intimate with him as I am now."

"Ah!" rejoins Mr. Brass, brim-full of moral precepts and love of virtue, "A charming subject of reflection for you very charming. A subject of proper pride and congratulation, Christopher. Honesty is the best policy.—I always find it so myself. I lost forty-seven pound ten by being honest this morning. But it's all gain, it's gain!"

Mr. Brass slily tickles his nose with his pen, and looks at Kit with the water standing in his eyes. Kit thinks that if there ever was a good man who belied his appearance, that man is Sampson Brass.

"A man," says Sampson, "who loses forty-seven pound ten in one morning by his honesty, is a man to be envied. If it had been eighty pound, the luxuriousness of feeling would have been increased. Every pound lost, would have been a hundred weight of happiness gained. The still, small voice, Christopher," cries Brass smiling, and tapping himself on the bosom, "is a singing comic songs within me now, and all is happiness and joy!"

Kit is so improved by the conversation, and finds it go so completely home to his feelings, that he is considering what he shall say, when Mr. Garland appears. The old gentleman is helped into the chaise with great obsequiousness by Mr. Sampson Brass; and the pony, after shaking his head several times, and standing for three or four minutes with all his four legs planted firmly on the ground, as if he had made up his mind never to stir from that spot, but there to live and die, suddenly darts off without the smallest notice, at the rate of twelve English miles an hour. Then Mr. Brass and his sister, (who has joined him at the door) exchange an odd kind of smile—not at all a pleasant one in its expression—and return to the society of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who during their absence has been regaling himself with various feats of pantomime, and is discovered at his desk, in a very flushed and heated condition, violently scratching out nothing with half a penknife.

Whenever Kit came alone, and without the chaise, it always happened that Sampson Brass was reminded of some mission, calling Mr. Swiveller, if not to Peckham Rye again, at all events to some pretty distant place from which he could not be expected to return for two or three hours, or in all probability a much longer time, as that gentleman was not, to say the truth, renowned for using great expedition on such occasions, but rather for protracting and spinning out the time to the very utmost limit of possibility. Mr. Swiveller out of sight, Miss Sally immediately with drew. Mr. Brass would then set the office

door wide open, hum his old tune with great gaiety of heart, and smile seraphically as before. Kit coming down-stairs would be called in; entertained with some moral and agreeable conversation; perhaps entreated to mind the office for an instant while Mr. Brass stepped over the way; and afterwards presented with one or two half-crowns as the case might be. This occurred so often, that Kit, nothing doubting but that they came from the single gentleman, who had already rewarded his mother with great liberality, could not enough admire his generosity, and bought so many cheap presents for her, and for little Jacob, and for the baby, and for Barbara to boot, that one or other of them was having some new trifle every day of their lives.

While these acts and deeds were in progress in and out of the office of Sampson Brass, Richard Swiveller, being often left alone therein, began to find the time hang heavy on his hands. For the better preservation of his cheerfulness, therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, he provided himself with a cribbage-board and pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from a damp living. Looking intently that way one night he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were correct, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her, before she was aware of his approach.

"Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed. Upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull, down-stairs. Please don't you tell upon me; please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"Oh ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

Vague recollections of several fantastic exercises with which he had refreshed himself after the fatigues of business, and to all of which, no doubt, the small servant was a party, rather disconcerted Mr. Swiveller; but he was not very sensitive on such points, and recovered himself speedily.

"Well,—come in,"—he said, after a little consideration. "Here—sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."

"Oh! I dursn't do it," rejoined the small servant, "Miss Sally 'ud kill me, if she know'd I came up here."

"Have you got a fire down-stairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally couldn't kill me if she know'd I went down there, so I'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It an't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She *never* tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide, and appeared thoughtful for a moment; then bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently he returned, followed by the boy from the public-house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord at a period when he was deep in his books and desirous to conciliate his friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen.

"There," said Richard, putting the plate before her. "First of all, clear that off, and then you'll see what's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that, but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"Oh! isn't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond

'l expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself, steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she soon learnt tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two sixpences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant, I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "Fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tight in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard and waited for her lead.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-EIGHTH.

Mr. Swiveller and his partner played several rubbers with varying success, until the loss of three sixpences, the gradual sinking of the purl, and the striking of ten o'clock, combined to render that gentleman mindful of the flight of Time, and the expediency of withdrawing before Mr. Sampson and Miss Sally Brass returned.

"With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health. You will excuse my wearing my hat, but the palace is damp, and the marble floor is—if I may be allowed the expression—sloppy."

As a precaution against this latter inconvenience, Mr. Swiveller had been sitting for some time with his feet on the hob, in which attitude he now gave utterance to these apologetic observations, and slowly sipped the last choice drops of nectar.

"The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the play?" said Mr. Swiveller, leaning his left arm heavily upon the table, and raising his voice and his right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.

The Marchioness nodded.

"Ha!" said Mr. Swiveller, with a portentous frown. "'Tis well. Marchioness! —but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!" He illustrated these melo-dramatic morsels by handing the tankard to himself with great humility, receiving it haughtily, drinking from it thirstily, and smacking his lips fiercely.

The small servant, who was not so well acquainted with theatrical conventionalities as Mr. Swiveller (having, indeed, never seen a play, or heard one spoken of, except by chance through chinks of doors and in other forbidden places,) was rather alarmed by demonstrations so novel in their nature, and showed her concern so plainly in her looks, that Mr. Swiveller felt it necessary to discharge his brigand manner for one more suitable to private life, as he asked,

"Do they often go where glory waits 'em, and leave you here?"

"Oh, yes; I believe you they do," returned the small servant. "Miss Sally 's such a one-er for that, she is."

"Such a what?" said Dick.

"Such a one-er," returned the Marchioness.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Swiveller determined to forego his responsible duty of setting her right, and to suffer her to talk on, as it was evident that her tongue was loosened by the purl, and her opportunities for conversation were not so frequent as to render a momentary check of little consequence.

"They sometimes go to see Mr. Quilp," said the small servant with a shrewd look; "they go to a many places, bless you."

"Is Mr. Brass a wunner?" said Dick.

"Not half what Miss Sally is, he isn't," replied the small servant, shaking her head. "Bless you, he'd never do anything without her."

"Oh! He would n't, would n't he?" said Dick.

"Miss Sally keeps him in such order," said the small servant; "he always asks her advice, he does; and he catches it sometimes. Bless you, you would n't believe how much he catches it."

"I suppose" said Dick, "that they consult together, a good deal, and talk about a great many people—about me, for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?"

The Marchioness nodded amazingly.

"Complimentary?" said Mr. Swiveller.

The Marchioness changed the motion of her head, which had not yet left off nodding, and suddenly began to shake it from side to side with a vehemence which threatened to dislocate her neck.

"Humph!" Dick muttered. "Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honour to—?"

"Miss Sally says you 're a funny chap," replied his friend.

"Well, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "that 's not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or degrading quality. Old King Cole was a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history."

"But she says," pursued his companion, "that you an't to be trusted."

"Why, really Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully; "several ladies and gentlemen—not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma'am, tradespeople have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hôtel over the way, inclined strongly to that opinion to-night when I ordered him to prepare the banquet. It's a popular prejudice, Marchioness; and yet I am sure I don't know why, for I have been trusted in my time to a considerable amount, and I can safely say that I never forsook my trust until it deserted me—never. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose?"

His friend nodded again, with a cunning look which seemed to hint that Mr. Brass held stronger opinions on the subject than his sister; and seeming to recollect herself, added, imploringly, "But don't you ever tell upon me, or I shall be beat to death."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, rising, "the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond—sometimes better; as in the present case, where his bond might prove but a doubtful sort of security. I am your friend, and I hope we shall play many more rubbers together in this same saloon. But, Marchioness," added Richard, stopping in his way to the door, and wheeling slowly round upon the small servant, who was following with the candle; "it occurs to me that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eye at keyholes, to know all this."

"I only wanted," replied the trembling Marchioness, "to know where the key of the safe was hid; and I would'nt have taken much if I had found it—only enough to squench my hunger."

"You did'nt find it then?" said Dick. "But of course you did'nt, or you'd be plumper. Good night, Marchioness. Fare thee well, and if for ever, then for ever fare thee well—and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents."

With this parting injunction, Mr. Swiveller emerged from the house; and feeling that he had by this time taken quite as much to drink as promised to be good for his constitution (purl being a rather strong and heady compound), wisely resolved to betake himself to his lodgings, and to bed at once. Homeward he went, therefore; and his apartments (for he still retained the plural fiction) being at no great distance from the office, he was soon seated in his own bed-chamber, where, having pulled off one boot and forgotten the other, he fell into deep cogitation.

"This Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, folding his arms, "is a very extraordinary person—surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through the keyholes of doors—can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

When his meditations had reached this satisfactory point, he became aware of his remaining boot, of which, with unimpaired solemnity, he proceeded to divest himself; shaking his head with exceeding gravity all the time, and sighing deeply.

"These rubbers," said Mr. Swiveller, putting on his nightcap in exactly the same style as he wore his hat, "remind me of the matrimonial fireside. Cheggs's wife plays cribbage; all-fours likewise She rings the changes on 'em now. From sport to sport they hurry her, to banish her regrets, and when they win a smile from her, they think that she forgets—but she don't. By this time, I should say," added Richard, getting his left cheek into profile, and looking complacently at the reflection of a very little scrap of whisker in the looking-glass, "by this time, I should say, the iron has entered into her soul. It serves her right!"

Melting from this stern and obdurate, into the tender and pathetic mood, Mr. Swiveller groaned a little, walked wildly up and down, and even made a show of tearing his hair, which however he thought better of, and wrenched the tassel from his nightcap instead. At last, undressing himself with a gloomy resolution, he got into bed.

Some men in his blighted position would have taken to drink; but as Mr. Swiveller had taken to that before, he only took, on receiving the news that Sophy Wackles was lost to him for ever, to playing the flute; thinking after mature consideration that it was a good, sound, dismal occupation, not only in unison with his own sad thoughts, but calculated to awaken a fellow-feeling in the bosoms of his neighbours. In pursuance of this resolution, he now drew a little table to his bedside, and arranging the light, and a small oblong music-book to the best advantage, took his flute from its box, and began to play most mournfully.

The air was, "Away with melancholy"—a composition, which, when it is played very slowly on the flute in bed, with the further disadvantage of being performed by a gentleman but imperfectly acquainted

with the instrument, who repeats one note a great many times before he can find the next, has not a lively effect. Yet for half the night, or more, Mr. Swiveller, lying sometimes on his back with his eyes upon the ceiling, and sometimes half out of bed to correct himself by the book, played this unhappy tune over and over again; never leaving off, save for a minute or two at a time to take breath and soliloquize about the Marchioness, and then beginning again with renewed vigour. It was not until he had quite exhausted his several subjects of meditation, and had breathed into the flute the whole sentiment of the purl down to its very dregs, and had nearly maddened the people of the house, and at both the next doors, and over the way, — that he shut up the music-book, extinguished the candle, and finding himself greatly lightened and relieved in his mind, turned round and fell asleep.

He awoke in the morning, much refreshed; and having taken half an hour's exercise at the flute, and graciously received a notice to quit from his landlady, who had been in waiting on the stairs for that purpose since the dawn of day, repaired to Bevis Marks, where the beautiful Sally was already at her post, bearing in her looks a radiance mild as that which beameth from the virgin moon.

Mr. Swiveller acknowledged her presence by a nod, and exchanged his coat for the aquatic jacket, which usually took some time fitting on, for, in consequence of a tightness in the sleeves, it was only to be got into by a series of struggles. This difficulty overcome, he took his seat at the desk.

"I say" — quoth Miss Brass, abruptly breaking silence, "you haven't seen a silver pencil-case this morning, have you?"

"I didn't meet many in the street," rejoined Mr. Swiveller. "I saw one — a stout pencil-case of respectable appearance — but as he was in company with an elderly penknife and a young toothpick, with whom he was in earnest conversation, I felt a delicacy in speaking to him."

"No, but have you?" returned Miss Brass. "Seriously, you know."

"What a dull dog you must be to ask me such a question seriously," said Mr Swiveller. "Haven't I this moment come?"

"Well, all I know is," replied Miss Sally, "that it's not to be found, and that it disappeared one day this week, when I left it on the desk."

"Halloa!" thought Richard, "I hope the Marchioness hasn't been at work here."

"There was a knife too," said Miss Sally, "of the same pattern. They were given to me by my father, years ago, and are both gone. You haven't missed anything yourself, have you?"

Mr. Swiveller involuntarily clapped his hands to the jacket, to be quite sure that it *was* a jacket and not a skirted coat; and having satisfied himself of the safety of this, his only moveable in Bevis Marks, made answer in the negative.

"It 's a very unpleasant thing, Dick"—said Miss Brass, pulling out the tin box and refreshing herself with a pinch of snuff; "but between you and me—between friends, you know, for if Sammy knew it, I should never hear the last of it—some of the office money, too, that has been left about, has gone in the same way. In particular, I have missed three half-crowns at three different times."

"You don't mean that," cried Dick. "Be careful what you say, old boy, for this is a serious matter. Are you quite sure? Is there no mistake?"

"It is so, and there can't be any mistake at all," rejoined Miss Brass, emphatically.

"Then, by Jove," thought Richard, laying down his pen, "I am afraid the Marchioness is done for!"

The more he discussed the subject in his thoughts, the more probable it appeared to Dick that the miserable little servant was the culprit. When he considered on what a spare allowance of food she lived, how neglected and untaught she was, and how her natural cunning had been sharpened by necessity and privation, he scarcely doubted it. And yet he pitied her so much, and felt so unwilling to have a matter of such gravity disturbing the oddity of their acquaintance, that he thought, and thought truly, that rather than receive fifty pounds down, he would have the Marchioness proved innocent.

While he was plunged in very profound and serious meditation upon this theme, Miss Sally sat shaking her head with an air of great mystery and doubt, when the voice of her brother Sampson, carolling a cheerful strain, was heard in the passage, and that gentleman himself, beaming with virtuous smiles, appeared.

"Mr. Richard, sir, good morning. Here we are again, sir, entering upon another day, with our bodies strengthened by slumber and breakfast, and our spirits fresh and flowing. Here, we are, Mr. Richard, rising with the sun to run our little course—our course of duty, sir—and, like him, get through our day's work with credit to ourselves and advantage to our fellow-creatures. A charming reflection, sir, very charming!"

While he addressed his clerk in these words, Mr. Brass was somewhat ostentatiously engaged in minutely examining and holding up against the light a five-pound bank-note, which he had brought in, in his hand.

Mr. Richard not receiving his remarks with anything like enthusiasm, his employer turned his eyes to his face, and observed that it wore a troubled expression.

"You 're out of spirits, sir," said Brass. "Mr. Richard, sir, we should fall to work cheerfully, and not in a despondent state. It becomes us, Mr. Richard, sir, to——"

Here the chaste Sarah heaved a loud sigh.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Sampson, "you too! Is anything the matter? Mr. Richard, sir——"

Dick, glancing at Miss Sally, saw that she was making signals to him, to acquaint her brother with the subject of their recent conversation. As his own position was not a very pleasant one until the matter was set at rest one way or other, he did so; and Miss Brass, plying her snuff-box at a most wasteful rate, corroborated his account.

The countenance of Sampson fell, and anxiety overspread his features. Instead of passionately bewailing the loss of his money, as Miss Sally had expected, he walked on tiptoe to the door, opened it, looked outside, shut it softly, returned on tiptoe, and said in a whisper,

"This is a most extraordinary and painful circumstance—Mr. Richard, sir, a most painful circumstance. The fact is, that I myself have missed several small sums from the desk of late, and have refrained from mentioning it, hoping that accident would discover the offender; but it has not done so—it has not done so. Sally—Mr. Richard, sir—this is a particularly distressing affair!"

As Sampson spoke, he laid the bank-note upon the desk among some papers, in an absent manner, and thrust his hands into his pockets. Richard Swiveller pointed to it, and admonished him to take it up.

"No, Mr. Richard, sir," rejoined Brass with emotion, "I will not take it up. I will let it lie there, sir. To take it up, Mr. Richard sir, would imply a doubt of you; and in you, sir, I have unlimited confidence. We will let it lie there, sir, if you please, and we will not take it up by any means." With that, Mr. Brass patted him twice or thrice upon the shoulder, in a most friendly

manner, and entreated him to believe that he had as much faith in his honesty as he had in his own.

Although at another time Mr. Swiveller might have looked upon this as a doubtful compliment, he felt it, under the then-existing circumstances, a great relief to be assured that he was not wrongfully suspected. When he had made a suitable reply, Mr. Brass wrung him by the hand, and fell into a brown study, as did Miss Sally likewise. Richard too remained in a thoughtful state; fearing every moment to hear the Marchioness impeached, and unable to resist the conviction that she must be guilty.

When they had severally remained in this condition for some minutes, Miss Sally all at once gave a loud rap upon the desk with her clenched fist, and cried, "I've hit it!"—as indeed she had, and chipped a piece out of it too; but that was not her meaning.

"Well," cried Brass anxiously. "Go on, will you?"

"Why," replied his sister with an air of triumph, "hasn't there been somebody always coming in and out of this office for the last three or four weeks; hasn't that somebody been left alone in it sometimes—thanks to you; and do you mean to tell me that that somebody isn't the thief?"

"What somebody?" blustered Brass.

"Why, what do you call him—Kit?"

"Mr. Garland's young man?"

"To be sure."

"Never!" cried Brass. "Never. I'll not hear of it. Don't tell me"—said Sampson, shaking his head, and working with both his hands as if he were clearing away ten thousand cobwebs. "I'll never believe it of him. Never."

"I say," repeated Miss Brass, taking another pinch of snuff, "that he's the thief."

"I say," returned Sampson violently, "that he is *not*. What do you mean? How dare you? Are characters to be whispered away like this? Do you know that he's the honestest and faithfullest fellow that ever lived, and that he has an irreproachable good name? Come in, come in."

These last words were not addressed to Miss Sally, though they partook of the tone in which the indignant remonstrances that preceded them had been uttered. They were addressed to some person who had knocked at the office-door; and they had hardly passed the lips of Mr. Brass, when this very Kit himself looked in.

"Is the gentleman up-stairs sir, if you please?"

"Yes, Kit," said Brass, still fired with an honest indignation, and frowning with knotted brows upon his sister; "Yes Kit, he is. I am glad to see you Kit, I am rejoiced to see you. Look in again as you come down-stairs, Kit. *That* lad a robber!" cried Brass when he had withdrawn, "with that frank and open countenance. I'd trust him with untold gold. Mr. Richard sir, have the goodness to step directly to Wrasp and Co.'s in Broad Street, and inquire if they have had instructions to appear in Carkem and Painter. *That* lad a robber," sneered Sampson, flushed and heated with his wrath. "Am I blind, deaf, silly? do I know nothing of human nature when I see it before me? Kit a robber! Bah!"

Flinging this final interjection at Miss Sally with immeasurable scorn and contempt, Sampson Brass thrust his head into his desk as if to shut the base world from his view, and breathed defiance from under its half-closed lid.

CHAPTER THE FIFTY-NINTH.

When Kit, having discharged his errand, came down-stairs from the single gentleman's apartment after the lapse of a quarter of an hour or so, Mr. Sampson Brass was alone in the office. He was not singing as usual, nor was he seated at his desk. The open door showed him standing before the fire with his back towards it, and looking so very strange that Kit supposed he must have been suddenly taken ill.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" said Kit.

"Matter!" cried Brass. "No. Why anything the matter?"

"You are so very pale," said Kit, "that I should hardly have known you."

"Pooh pooh! mere fancy," cried Brass, stooping to throw up the cinders. "Never bette. Kit, never better in all my life. Merry too. Ha ha! How's our friend above-stairs, eh?"

"A great deal better," said Kit.

"I'm glad to hear it," rejoined Brass; "thankful, I may say. An excellent gentleman—worthy, liberal, generous, gives very little trouble—an admirable lodger. Ha ha! Mr. Garland—he's well I hope, Kit—and the pony—my friend, my particular friend you know. Ha ha!"

Kit gave a satisfactory account of all the little household at Abel Cottage. Mr. Brass, who seemed remarkably inattentive and impatient, mounted on his stool, and beckoning him to come nearer, took him by the button-hole.

"I have been thinking, Kit," said the lawyer, "that I could throw some little emoluments into your mother's way—You have a mother, I think? If I recollect right, you told me—"

"Oh yes sir, yes certainly."

"A widow I think? an industrious widow?"

"A harder-working woman or a better mother, never lived, sir."

"Ah!" cried Brass. "That's affecting, truly affecting. A poor widow struggling to maintain her orphans in decency and comfort, is a delicious picture of human goodness. Put down your hat, Kit."

"Thank you sir, I must be going directly."

"Put it down while you stay, at any rate," said Brass taking it from him and making some confusion among the papers, in finding a place for it on the desk. "I was thinking, Kit, that we have often houses to let for people we are concerned for, and matters of that sort. Now you know we're obliged to put people into those houses to take care of 'em—very often undeserving people that we can't depend upon. What's to prevent our having a person that we *can* depend upon, and enjoying the delight of doing a good action at the same time? I say, what's to prevent our employing this worthy woman, your mother? What with one job and another, there's lodging—and good lodging too—pretty well all the year round, rent free, and a weekly allowance besides, Kit, that would provide them with a great many comforts they don't at present enjoy. Now what do you think of that? Do you see any objection? My only desire is to serve you, Kit; therefore if you do, say so freely."

As Brass spoke, he moved the hat twice or thrice, and shuffled among the papers again, as if in search of something.

"How can I see any objection to such a kind offer sir?" replied Kit with his whole heart. "I don't know how to thank you sir, I don't indeed."

"Why then," said Brass, suddenly turning upon him and thrusting his face close to Kit's with such a repulsive smile that the latter, even in the very height of his gratitude, drew back quite startled. "Why then, *it's done*."

Kit looked at him in some confusion.

"Done, I say"—added Sampson, rubbing his hands and veiling himself again in his usual oily manner. "Ha ha! and so you shall find Kit, so you shall find. But dear me" said Brass," what a time Mr. Richard is gone! A sad loiterer to be sure! Will you mind the office one minute while I run up-stairs? Only one minute. I'll not detain you an instant longer, on any account, Kit."

Talking as he went, Mr. Brass bustled out of the office, and in a very short time returned. Mr. Swiveller came back almost at the same instant; and as Kit was leaving the room hastily to make up for lost time, Miss Brass herself encountered him in the doorway.

"Oh!" sneered Sally looking after him

as she entered. "There goes your pet, Sammy, eh?"

"Ah! There he goes," replied Brass. 'My pet, if you please. An honest fellow, Mr. Richard sir—a worthy fellow, indeed!"

"Hem!" coughed Miss Brass.

"I tell you, you aggravating vagabond" said the angry Sampson, "that I'd stake my life upon his honesty. Am I never to hear the last of this? Am I always to be baited, and beset, by your mean suspicions? Have you no regard for true merit, you malignant fellow? If you come to that, I'd sooner suspect your honesty than his."

Miss Sally pulled out the tin snuff-box, and took a long, slow pinch, regarding her brother with a steady gaze all the time.

"She drives me wild, Mr. Richard, sir" said Brass, "she exasperates me beyond all bearing. I am heated and exerted sir, I know I am. These are not business manners, sir, nor business looks, but she carries me out of myself."

"Why don't you leave him alone?" said Dick.

"Because she can't sir," retorted Brass; "because to chafe and vex me is a part of her nature sir, and she will and must do it, or I don't believe she'd have her health. But never mind," said Brass, "never mind. I've carried my point. I've shown my confidence in the lad. He has minded the office again. Ha ha! Ugh, you viper!"

The beautiful virgin took another pinch, and put the snuff-box in her pocket; still looking at her brother with perfect composure.

"He has minded the office again," said Brass triumphantly; "he has had my confidence, and he shall continue to have it; he —why, where's the—"

"What have you lost?" inquired Mr. Swiveller.

"Dear me!" said Brass, slapping all his pockets one after another, and looking into his desk, and under it, and upon it, and wildly tossing the papers about, "the note, Mr. Richard, sir, the five-pound note—what can have become of it? I laid it down here—God bless me!"

"What!" cried Miss Sally starting up, clapping her hands, and scattering the papers on the floor. "Gone! Now who's right? Now, who's got it? Never mind five pounds—what's five pounds? He's honest you know, quite honest. It would be mean to suspect him. Don't run after him. No, no, not for the world!"

"Is it really gone though?" said Dick, looking at Brass with a face as pale as his own.

"Upon my word, Mr. Richard, sir," replied the lawyer, feeling in all his pockets with looks of the greatest agitation, "I fear this is a black business. It's certainly gone, sir. What's to be done?"

"Don't run after him," said Miss Sally, taking more snuff. "Don't run after him on any account. Give him time to get rid of it, you know. It would be cruel to find him out!"

Mr. Swiveller and Sampson Brass looked from Miss Sally to each other in a state of utter bewilderment, and then, as by one impulse, caught up their hats and rushed into the street—darting along in the middle of the road, and dashing aside all obstructions as though they were running for their lives.

It happened that Kit had been running, too, though not so fast, and having the start of them by some few minutes, was a good distance ahead. As they were pretty certain of the road he must have taken, however, and kept on at a great pace, they came up with him, at the very moment when he had taken breath, and was breaking into a run again.

"Stop!" cried Sampson, laying his hand on one shoulder, while Mr. Swiveller pounced upon the other. "Not so fast, sir. You're in a hurry?"

"Yes, I am," said Kit, looking from one to the other in great surprise.

"I—I—can hardly believe it," panted Sampson, "but something of value is missing from the office. I hope you don't know what."

"Know what! Good Heaven, Mr Brass!" cried Kit, trembling from head to foot; "you don't suppose—"

"No, no," rejoined Brass, quickly, "I don't suppose anything. Don't say *I* said you did. You'll come back quietly, I hope?"

"Of course I will," returned Kit. "Why not?"

"To be sure!" said Brass. "Why not? I hope there may turn out to be no why not. If you knew the trouble I've been in this morning through taking your part, Christopher, you'd be sorry for it."

"And I am sure you'll be sorry for having suspected me, sir," replied Kit. "Come. Let us make haste back."

"Certainly!" cried Brass; "the quicker, the better. Mr. Richard—have the goodness, sir, to take that arm. I'll take this one. It's not easy walking three abreast, but under these circumstances it must be done, sir; there's no help for it."

Kit did turn from white to red, and from red to white again, when they secured him thus and for a moment seemed

disposed to resist. But quickly recollecting himself, and remembering that if he made any struggle, he would perhaps be dragged by the collar through the public streets, he only repeated, with great earnestness, and with the tears standing in his eyes, that they would be sorry for this—and suffered them to lead him off. While they were on the way back, Mr. Swiveller, upon whom his present functions sat very irksomely, took an opportunity of whispering in his ear that if he would confess his guilt, even by so much as a nod, and promise not to do so any more, he would connive at his kicking Sampson Brass on the shins and escaping up a court; but Kit indignantly rejecting this proposal, Mr. Richard had nothing for it, but to hold him tight until they reached Bevis Marks, and ushered him into the presence of the charming Sarah, who immediately took the precaution of locking the door.

"Now you know," said Brass, "if this is a case of innocence, it is a case of that description, Christopher, where the fullest disclosure is the best satisfaction for everybody. Therefore, if you'll consent to an examination"—he demonstrated what kind of examination he meant, by turning back the cuffs of his coat — "it will be a comfortable and pleasant thing for all parties."

"Search me," said Kit, proudly, holding up his arms. "But mind, sir — I know you'll be sorry for this, to the last day of your life."

"It is certainly a very painful occurrence," said Brass, with a sigh, as he dived into one of Kit's pockets, and fished up a miscellaneous collection of small articles; "very painful. Nothing here, Mr. Richard, sir; all perfectly satisfactory. Nor here, sir. Nor in the waistcoat, Mr. Richard, nor in the coat tails. So far I am rejoiced, I am sure."

Richard Swiveller, holding Kit's hat in his hand, was watching the proceedings with great interest, and bore upon his face the slightest possible indication of a smile, as Brass, shutting one of his eyes, looked with the other up the inside of one of the poor fellow's sleeves as if it were a telescope, when Sampson turning hastily to him, bade him search the hat.

"Here's a handkerchief," said Dick.

"No harm in that, sir," rejoined Brass, applying his eye to the other sleeve, and speaking in the voice of one who was contemplating an immense extent of prospect. "No harm in a handkerchief, sir, whatever. The faculty don't consider it a healthy custom, I believe, Mr. Richard, to carry one's handkerchief in one's hat—I have heard that it keeps the head too warm — but in every other point of view, it's being there is extremely satisfactory—extremely so."

An exclamation, at once from Richard Swiveller, Miss Sally, and Kit himself, cut the lawyer short. He turned his head, and saw Dick standing with the bank-note in his hand.

"In the hat?" cried Brass, in a sort of shriek.

"Under the handkerchief, and tucked beneath the lining," said Dick, aghast at the discovery.

Mr. Brass looked at him, at his sister, at the walls, at the ceiling, at the floor — everywhere but at Kit, who stood quite stupified and motionless.

"And this," cried Sampson, clasping his hands, "is the world that turns upon its own axis, and has Lunar influences, and revolutions round Heavenly Bodies, and various games of that sort! This is human natur, is it! Oh natur, natur! This is the miscreant that I was going to benefit with all my little arts, and that even now I feel so much for, as to wish to let him go! But," added Mr. Brass, with greater fortitude, "I am myself a lawyer, and bound to set an example in carrying the laws of my happy country into effect. Sally, my dear, forgive me, and catch hold of him on the other side. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to run and fetch a constable. The weakness is past and over, sir, and moral strength returns. A constable, sir, if *you* please!"

CHAPTER THE SIXTIETH.

Kit stood as one entranced, with his eyes opened wide and fixed upon the ground, regardless alike of the tremulous hold which Mr. Brass maintained on one side of his cravat, and of the firmer grasp of Miss Sally upon the other; although this latter detention was in itself no small inconvenience, as that fascinating woman, besides screwing her knuckles rather inconveniently into his throat from time to time, had fastened upon him in the first instance with so tight a grip, that even in the disorder and distraction of his thoughts he could not divest himself of an uneasy sense of choking. Between the brother and sister he remained in this posture, quite unresisting and passive, until Mr. Swiveller returned with a police constable at his heels.

This functionary, being of course well used to such scenes, looking upon all kinds of robbery, from petty larceny up to housebreaking or ventures on the highway, as matters in the regular course of business, and regarding the perpetrators in the light of so many customers coming to be served at the wholesale and retail shop of criminal law, where he stood behind the counter, received Mr. Brass's statement of facts with about as much interest and surprise, as an undertaker might evince if required to listen to a circumstantial account of the last illness of a person whom he was called in to wait upon professionally, and took Kit into custody with a decent indifference.

"We had better," said this subordinate minister of justice, "get to the office while there's a magistrate sitting. I shall want you to come along with us, Mr Brass, and the—" he looked at Miss Sally as if in some doubt whether she might not be a griffin or other fabulous monster.

"The lady, eh!" said Sampson.

"Ah!" replied the constable. "Yes—the lady. Likewise the young man that found the property."

"Mr. Richard, sir," said Brass in a mournful voice. "A sad necessity. But the altar of our country, sir——"

"You'll have a hackney-coach, I suppose?" interrupted the constable, holding Kit (whom his other captors had released) carelessly by the arm, a little above the elbow. "Be so good as send for one, will you?"

"But hear me speak a word," cried Kit, raising his eyes and looking imploringly about him. "Hear me speak a word. I am no more guilty than any one of you. Upon my soul I am not. I, a thief! Oh, Mr. Brass, you know me better. I am sure you know me better. This is not right of you, indeed."

"I give you my word, constable—" said Brass. But here the constable interposed with the constitutional principle "words be blowed;" observing that words were but spoon-meat for babes and sucklings, and that oaths were the food for strong men.

"Quite true, constable," assented Brass in the same mournful tone. "Strictly correct. I give you my oath, constable, that down to a few minutes ago, when this fatal discovery was made, I had such confidence in that lad, that I'd have trusted him with —a hackney-coach, Mr. Richard, sir; you're very slow, sir."

"Who is there that knows me," cried Kit, "that would not trust me—that does not? ask anybody whether they have ever doubted me; whether I have ever wronged them of a farthing. Was I ever once dishonest when I was poor and hungry, and is it likely I would begin now! Oh consider what you do. How can I meet the kindest friends that ever human creature had, with this dreadful charge upon me!"

Mr. Brass rejoined that it would have been well for the prisoner if he had thought of that before, and was about to make some other gloomy observations, when the voice of the single gentleman was heard demanding from above-stairs what was the matter, and what was the cause of all that noise and hurry. Kit made an involuntary start towards the door in his anxiety to answer for himself, but being speedily detained by the constable, had the agony of seeing Sampson Brass run out alone to tell the story in his own way.

"And he can hardly believe it, either," said Sampson, when he returned, "nor nobody will. I wish I could doubt the evidence of my senses, but their depositions are unimpeachable. It's of no use cross-examining my eyes," cried Sampson, winking and rubbing them, "they stick to their first account, and will. Now, Sarah, I hear the coach in the Marks; get on your bonnet, and we'll be off. A sad errand! a moral funeral, quite!"

"Mr. Brass," said Kit, "do me one favour. Take me to Mr. Witherden's first."

Sampson shook his head irresolutely.

"Do," said Kit. "My master's there. For Heaven's sake, take me there first."

"Well, I don't know," stammered Brass, who perhaps had his reasons for wishing to show as fair as possible in the eyes of the notary. "How do we stand in point of time, constable, eh?"

The constable, who had been chewing a straw all this while with great philosophy, replied that if they went away at once they would have time enough, but that if they stood shilly-shallying there any longer they must go straight to the Mansion House; and finally expressed his opinion that that was where it was, and that was all about it.

Mr. Richard Swiveller having arrived inside the coach, and still remaining immoveable in the most commodious corner with his face to the horses, Mr. Brass instructed the officer to remove his prisoner, and declared himself quite ready. Therefore the constable, still holding Kit in the same manner, and pushing him on a little before him, so as to keep him at about three-quarters of an arm's length in advance (which is the professional mode), thrust him into the vehicle and followed himself. Miss Sally entered next; and there being now four inside, Sampson Brass got upon the box, and made the coachman drive on.

Still completely stunned by the sudden and terrible change which had taken place in his affairs, Kit sat gazing out of the coach-window, almost hoping to see some monstrous phenomenon in the streets, which might give him reason to believe he was in a dream. Alas! Everything was too real and familiar; the same succession of turnings, the same houses, the same streams of people running side by side in different directions upon the pavement, the same bustle of carts and carriages in the road, the same well-remembered objects in the shop-windows; a regularity in the very noise and hurry which no dream ever mirrored. Dream-like as the story was, it was true. He stood charged with robbery, the note had been found upon him, though he was innocent in thought and deed, and they were carrying him back, a prisoner.

Absorbed in these painful ruminations, thinking with a drooping heart of his mother and little Jacob, feeling as though even the consciousness of innocence would be insufficient to support him in the presence of his friends if they believed him guilty, and sinking in hope and courage more and more as they drew nearer to the notary's, poor Kit was looking earnestly out of the window, observant of nothing,—when all at once, as though it had been conjured up by magic, he became aware of the face of Quilp.

And what a leer there was upon the face! It was from the open window of a

tavern that it looked out; and the dwarf had so spread himself over it, with his elbows on the window-sill and his head resting on both his hands, that what between this attitude and his being swoln with suppressed laughter, he looked puffed and bloated into twice his usual breadth. Mr. Brass on recognizing him immediately stopped the coach. As it came to a halt directly opposite to where he stood, the dwarf pulled off his hat, and saluted the party with a hideous and grotesque politeness.

"Aha!" he cried, "where now, Brass? where now? Sally with you, too? Sweet Sally! And Dick? Pleasant Dick! And Kit? Honest Kit!"

"He's extremely cheerful!" said Brass to the coachman. "Very much so! Ah, sir — a sad business! Never believe in honesty any more, sir."

"Why not?" returned the dwarf. "Why not, you rogue of a lawyer, why not?"

"Bank-note lost in our office, sir," said Brass, shaking his head. "Found in his hat, sir — he previously left alone there — no mistake at all, sir — chain of evidence complete — not a link wanting."

"What!" cried the dwarf, leaning half his body out of window, "Kit a thief! Kit a thief! Ha, ha, ha! Why, he's an uglier-looking thief than can be seen anywhere for a penny. Eh, Kit — eh? Ha, ha, ha! Have you taken Kit into custody before he had time and opportunity to beat me? Eh, Kit, eh?" And with that he burst into a yell of laughter, manifestly to the great terror of the coachman, and pointed to a dyer's pole hard by, where a dangling suit of clothes bore some resemblance to a man upon a gibbet.

"Is it coming to that, Kit?" cried the dwarf, rubbing his hands violently. "Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a disappointment for little Jacob, and for his darling mother! Let him have the Bethel minister to comfort and console him, Brass. Eh, Kit, eh? Drive on, coachey, drive on. Bye, bye, Kit; all good go with you; keep up your spirits; my love to the Garlands—the dear old lady and gentleman. Say I inquired after 'em, will you? Blessings on 'em, and on you, and on everybody, Kit. Blessings on all the world!"

With such good wishes and farewells, poured out in a rapid torrent until they were out of hearing, Quilp suffered them to depart; and when he could see the coach no longer, drew in his head, and rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of enjoyment.

When they reached the notary's, which they were not long in doing, for they had encountered the dwarf in a bye street at a very little distance from the house, Mr. Brass dismounted; and opening the coach door with a melancholy visage, requested his sister to accompany him into the office, with the view of preparing the good people within for the mournful intelligence that awaited them. Miss Sally complying, he desired Mr. Swiveller to accompany them. So, into the office they went; Mr. Sampson and his sister arm-in-arm; and Mr. Swiveller following alone.

The notary was standing before the fire in the outer office, talking to Mr. Abel and the elder Mr. Garland, while Mr. Chuckster sat writing at the desk, picking up such crumbs of their conversation as happened to fall in his way. This posture of affairs Mr. Brass observed through the glass-door as he was turning the handle, and seeing that the notary recognized him, he began to shake his head and sigh deeply while that partition yet divided them.

"Sir," said Sampson, taking off his hat, and kissing the two forefingers of his right hand beaver glove, "my name is Brass—Brass of Bevis Marks, sir. I have had the honour and pleasure, sir, of being concerned against you in some little testamentary matters. How do you do, sir?"

"My clerk will attend to any business you may have come upon, Mr. Brass," said the notary, turning away.

"Thank you, sir," said Brass, "thank you, I am sure. Allow me, sir, to introduce my sister — quite one of us, sir, although of the weaker sex — of great use in my business, sir, I assure you. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to come forward, if you please — No, really," said Brass, stepping between the notary and his private office (towards which he had begun to retreat), and speaking in the tone of an injured man, "really, sir, I must, under favour, request a word or two with you, indeed."

"Mr. Brass," said the other, in a decided tone, "I am engaged. You see that I am occupied with these gentlemen. If you will communicate your business to Mr. Chuckster, yonder, you will receive every attention."

"Gentlemen," said Brass, laying his right hand on his waistcoat, and looking towards the father and son with a smooth smile — "Gentlemen, I appeal to you — really, gentlemen—consider, I beg of you. I am of the law. I am styled 'gentleman' by Act of Parliament. I maintain the title by the annual payment of thirteen pound ten shillings for a certificate. I am not one of your players of music, stage actors, writers of books, or painters of pic

tures, who assume a station that the laws of their country don't recognise. I am none of your strollers or vagabonds. If any man brings his action against me, he must describe me as a gentleman, or his action is null and void. I appeal to you—is this quite respectful? Really, gentlemen—"

"Well, will you have the goodness to state your business, then, Mr. Brass," said the notary.

"Sir," rejoined Brass, "I will. Ah, Mr. Witherden! you little know the—but I will not be tempted to travel from the point, sir. I believe the name of one of these gentlemen is Garland."

"Of both," said the notary.

"In-deed!" rejoined Brass, cringing excessively. "But I might have known that from the uncommon likeness. Extremely happy, I am sure, to have the honour of an introduction to two such gentlemen, although the occasion is a most painful one. One of you gentlemen has a servant called Kit?"

"Both," replied the notary.

"Two Kits?" said Brass, smiling. "Dear me!"

"One Kit, sir," returned Mr. Witherden, angrily, "who is employed by both gentlemen. What of him?"

"This of him, sir," rejoined Brass, dropping his voice impressively. "That young man, sir, that I have felt unbounded and unlimited confidence in, and always behaved to as if he was my equal — that young man has this morning committed a robbery in my office, and been taken almost in the fact."

"This must be some falsehood!" cried the notary.

"It is not possible," said Mr. Abel.

"I'll not believe one word of it!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

Mr. Brass looked mildly round upon them, and rejoined—

"Mr. Witherden, sir, *your* words are actionable, and if I was a man of low and mean standing, who couldn't afford to be slandered, I should proceed for damages. Hows'ever, sir, being what I am, I merely scorn such expressions. The honest warmth of the other gentleman I respect, and I'm truly sorry to be the messenger of such unpleasant news. I shouldn't have put myself in this painful position, I assure you, but that the lad himself desired to be brought here in the first instance, and I yielded to his prayers. Mr. Chuckster, sir, will you have the goodness to tap at the window for the constable that's waiting in the coach?"

The three gentlemen looked at each other with blank faces when these words were uttered; and Mr. Chuckster, doing as he was desired, and leaping off his stool with something of the excitement of an inspired prophet whose foretellings had in the fulness of time been realized, held the door open for the entrance of the wretched captive.

Such a scene as there was when Kit came in, and bursting into the rude eloquence with which truth at length inspired him, called Heaven to witness that he was innocent, and that how the property came to be found upon him he knew not! Such a confusion of tongues, before the circumstances were related, and the proofs disclosed! Such a dead silence when all was told, and his three friends exchanged looks of doubt and amazement!

"Is it not possible," said Mr. Witherden, after a long pause, "that this note may have found its way into the hat by some accident, — such as the removal of papers on the desk, for instance?"

But this was clearly shown to be quite impossible. Mr. Swiveller, though an unwilling witness, could not help proving to demonstration, from the position in which it was found, that it must have been designedly secreted.

"It's very distressing," said Brass, "immensely distressing, I am sure. When he comes to be tried, I shall be very happy to recommend him to mercy on account of his previous good character. I did lose money, before, certainly, but it doesn't quite follow that he took it. The presumption's against him — strongly against him—but we're Christians, I hope?"

"I suppose," said the constable, looking round, "that no gentleman here can give evidence as to whether he's been flush of money of late. Do you happen to know, sir?"

"He has had money from time to time, certainly," returned Mr. Garland, to whom the man had put the question. "But that, as he always told me, was given him by Mr. Brass himself."

"Yes, to be sure," said Kit, eagerly. "You can bear me out in that, sir?"

"Eh?" cried Brass, looking from face to face with an expression of stupid amazement.

"The money, you know — the half-crowns, that you gave me — from the lodger," said Kit.

"Oh dear me!" cried Brass, shaking his head and frowning heavily. "This is a bad case, I find; a very bad case indeed."

"What, did you give him no money on account of anybody, sir?" asked Mr. Garland, with great anxiety.

"*I* give him money, sir!" returned Sampson. "Oh, come, you know this is too barefaced. Constable, my good fellow, we had better be going."

"What!" shrieked Kit. "Does he deny that he did? ask him, somebody, pray. Ask him to tell you whether he did or not!"

"Did you, sir?" asked the notary.

"I tell you what, gentlemen," replied Brass, in a very grave manner, "he'll not serve his case this way, and really, if you feel any interest in him, you had better advise him to go upon some other tack. Did I, sir! Of course I never did."

"Gentlemen," cried Kit, on whom a light broke suddenly, "Master, Mr. Abel, Mr. Witherden, every one of you—he did it! What I have done to offend him, I don't know, but this is a plot to ruin me. Mind, gentlemen, it's a plot, and whatever comes of it, I will say with my dying breath that he put that note in my hat himself. Look at him, gentlemen. See how he changes colour. Which of us looks the guilty person—he, or I?"

"You hear him, gentlemen?" said Brass, smiling, "you hear him. Now, does this case strike you as assuming rather a black complexion, or does it not? Is it at all a treacherous case, do you think, or is it one of mere ordinary guilt? Perhaps, gentlemen, if he had not said this in your presence and I had reported it, you'd have held this to be impossible likewise, eh?"

With such pacific and bantering remarks did Mr. Brass refute the foul aspersion on his character; but the virtuous Sarah, moved by stronger feelings, and having at heart, perhaps a more jealous regard for the honour of her family, flew from her brother's side without any previous intimation of her design, and darted at the prisoner with the utmost fury. It would undoubtedly have gone hard with Kit's face, but that the wary constable, foreseeing her design, drew him aside at the critical moment, and thus placed Mr. Chuckster in circumstances of some jeopardy; for that gentleman happening to be next the object of Miss Brass's wrath, and rage being, like love and fortune, blind, was pounced upon by the fair enslaver, and had a false collar plucked up by the roots, and his hair very much dishevelled, before the exertions of the company could make her sensible of her mistake.

The constable, taking warning by this desperate attack, and thinking perhaps that it would be more satisfactory to the ends of justice if the prisoner was taken before a magistrate, whole, rather than in small pieces, led him back to the hackney-coach without more ado, and further insisted on Miss Brass becoming an outside passenger; to which proposal the charming creature, after a little angry discussion, yielded her consent; and so took her brother Sampson's place upon the box, Mr. Brass with some reluctance agreeing to occupy her seat inside. These arrangements perfected, they drove to the justice-room with all speed, followed by the notary and his two friends in another coach. Mr. Chuckster alone was left behind—greatly to his indignation; for he held the evidence he could have given, relative to Kit's returning to work out the shilling, to be so very material as bearing upon his hypocritical and designing character, that he considered its suppression little better than a compromise of felony.

At the justice-room they found the single gentleman, who had gone straight there, and was expecting them with desperate impatience. But not fifty single gentlemen rolled into one could have helped poor Kit, who in half an hour afterwards was committed for trial, and was assured by a friendly officer on his way to prison that there was no occasion to be cast down, for the sessions would soon be on, and he would in all likelihood get his little affair disposed of, and be comfortably transported in less than a fortnight.

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-FIRST.

Let moralists and philosophers say what they may, it is very questionable whether a guilty man would have felt half as much misery that night, as Kit did, being innocent. The world, being in the constant commission of vast quantities of injustice, is a little too apt to comfort itself with the idea that if the victim of its falsehood and malice have a clear conscience, he cannot fail to be sustained under his trials, and somehow or other to come right at last; "in which case" say they who have hunted him down, "though we certainly don't expect it—nobody will be better pleased than

we." Whereas, the world would do well to reflect, that injustice is in itself, to every generous and properly constituted mind, an injury, of all others the most insufferable, the most torturing, and the most hard to bear; and that many clear consciences have gone to their account elsewhere, and many sound hearts have broken, because of this very reason; the knowledge of their own deserts only aggravating their sufferings, and rendering them the less endurable.

The world, however, was not in fault in Kit's case. But Kit was innocent, and knowing this, and feeling that his best friends deemed him guilty—that Mr. and Mrs. Garland would look upon him as a monster of ingratitude — that Barbara would associate him with all that was bad and criminal—that the pony would consider himself forsaken—and that even his own mother might perhaps yield to the strong appearances against him, and believe him to be the wretch he seemed—knowing and feeling all this, he experienced at first an agony of mind which no words can describe, and walked up and down the little cell in which he was locked up for the night, almost beside himself with grief.

Even when the violence of these emotions had in some degree subsided, and he was beginning to grow more calm, there came into his mind a new thought, the anguish of which was scarcely less. The child—the bright star of the simple fellow's life—she, who always came back upon him like a beautiful dream,—who had made the poorest part of his existence, the happiest and best—who had ever been so gentle, and considerate, and good—if she were ever to hear of this, what would she think! As this idea occurred to him, the walls of the prison seemed to melt away, and the old place to reveal itself in their stead, as it was wont to be on winter nights—the fireside, the little supper-table, the old man's hat and coat, and stick—the half-opened door, leading to her little room —they were all there. And Nell herself was there, and he—both laughing heartily as they had often done—and when he had got as far as this, Kit could go no farther, but flung himself upon his poor bedstead and wept.

It was a long night, that seemed as though it would have no end; but he slept too, and dreamed—always of being at liberty, and roving about, now with one person and now with another; but ever with a vague dread of being recalled to prison; not that prison, but one which was in itself a dim idea, not of a place, but of a care and sorrow: of something oppressive and always present, and yet impossible to define. At last the morning dawned, and there was the jail itself—cold, black, and dreary, and very real indeed.

He was left to himself, however, and there was comfort in that. He had liberty to walk in a small paved yard at a certain hour, and learnt from the turnkey, who came to unlock his cell and show him where to wash, that there was a regular time for visiting every day, and that if any of his friends came to see him, he would be fetched down to the grate. When he had given him this information, and a tin porringer containing his breakfast, the man locked him up again, and went clattering along the stone passage, opening and shutting a great many other doors, and raising numberless loud echoes which resounded through the building for a long time, as if they were in prison too, and unable to get out.

This turnkey had given him to understand that he was lodged, like some few others in the jail, apart from the mass of prisoners; because he was not supposed to be utterly depraved and irreclaimable, and had never occupied apartments in that mansion before. Kit was thankful for this indulgence, and sat reading the church catechism very attentively (though he had known it by heart from a little child), until he heard the key in the lock, and the man entered again.

"Now then," he said, "come on."

"Where to, sir?" asked Kit.

The man contented himself by briefly replying "Wisitors;" and taking him by the arm in exactly the same manner as the constable had done the day before, led him through several winding ways and strong gates into a passage, where he placed him at a grating, and turned upon his heel. Beyond this grating, at the distance of about four or five feet, was another, exactly like it. In the space between, sat a turnkey reading a newspaper; and outside the further railing Kit saw, with a palpitating heart, his mother with the baby in her arms, Barbara's mother with her never-failing umbrella, and poor little Jacob, staring in with all his might, as though he were looking for the bird, or the wild beast, and thought the men were mere accidents with whom the bars could have no possible concern.

But directly little Jacob saw his brother, and, thrusting his arms between the rails to hug him, found that he came no nearer, but still stood afar off, with his head resting on the arm by which he held to one of the bars, he began to cry most piteously; whereupon Kit's mother and Barbara's mo-

ther, who had restrained themselves as much as possible, burst out sobbing and weeping afresh. Poor Kit could not help joining them, and not one of them could speak a word.

During this melancholy pause, the turnkey read his newspaper with a waggish look (he had evidently got among the facetious paragraphs) until, happening to take his eyes off it for an instant, as if to get, by dint of contemplation, at the very marrow of some joke of a deeper sort than the rest, it appeared to occur to him for the first time that somebody was crying.

"Now, ladies, ladies," he said, looking round with surprise, "I'd advise you not to waste time like this. It's allowanced here, you know. You mustn't let that child make that noise either. It's against all rules."

"I'm his poor mother, sir," sobbed Mrs. Nubbles, curtsying humbly, "and this is his brother, sir. Oh dear, dear me!"

"Well!" replied the turnkey, folding his paper on his knee, so as to get with greater convenience at the top of the next column. "It can't be helped, you know. He an't the only one in the same fix. You mustn't make a noise about it!"

With that, he went on reading. The man was not naturally cruel or hard-hearted. He had come to look upon felony as a kind of disorder, like the scarlet fever or erysipelas: some people had it—some hadn't—just as it might be.

"Oh! my darling Kit," said his mother, whom Barbara's mother had charitably relieved of the baby—"that I should see my poor boy here!"

"You don't believe I did what they accuse me of, mother dear?" cried Kit in a choking voice.

"*I* believe it!" exclaimed the poor woman. "*I*, that never knew you tell a lie, or do a bad action from your cradle—that have never had a moment's sorrow on your account, except it was for the poor meals that you have taken with such good-humour and content, that I forgot how little there was when I thought how kind and thoughtful you were, though you were but a child!—I believe it of the son that's been a comfort to me from the hour of his birth to this time, and that I never laid down one night in anger with! I believe it of you, Kit!—"

"Why then, thank God!" said Kit, clutching the bars with an earnestness that shook them, "and I can bear it, mother. Come what may, I shall always have one drop of happiness in my heart when I think that you said that."

At this, the poor woman fell a crying

again, and Barbara's mother too. And little Jacob, whose disjointed thoughts had by this time resolved themselves into a pretty distinct impression that Kit couldn't go out for a walk if he wanted, and that there were no birds, lions, tigers, or other natural curiosities behind those bars—nothing indeed, but a caged brother — added his tears to theirs with as little noise as possible.

Kit's mother, drying her eyes (and moistening them, poor soul, more than she dried them), now took from the ground a small basket, and submissively addressed herself to the turnkey, saying, would he please to listen to her for a minute. The turnkey, being in the very crisis and passion of a joke, motioned to her with his hand to keep silent one minute longer, for her life. Nor did he remove his hand into its former posture, but kept it in the same warning attitude until he had finished the paragraph, when he paused for a few seconds; with a smile upon his face, as who should say "this editor is a comical blade—a funny dog," and then asked her what she wanted.

"I have brought him a little something to eat," said the good woman. "If you please, sir, might he have it?"

"Yes, — he may have it. There's no rule against that. Give it to me when you go, and I'll take care he has it."

"No, but if you please, sir — don't be angry with me, sir—I am his mother, and you had a mother once—If I might only see him eat a little bit, I should go away so much more satisfied that he was all comfortable."

And again the tears of Kit's mother burst forth, and of Barbara's mother, and of little Jacob. As to the baby, it was crowing and laughing with all its might—under the idea, apparently, that the whole scene had been invented and got up for its particular satisfaction.

The turnkey looked as if he thought the request a strange one and rather out of the common way, but nevertheless he laid down his paper, and coming round to where Kit's mother stood, took the basket from her, and after inspecting its contents, handed it to Kit, and went back to his place. It may be easily conceived that the prisoner had no great appetite, but he sat down upon the ground and ate as hard as he could, while, at every morsel he put into his mouth, his mother sobbed and wept afresh, though with a softened grief that bespoke the satisfaction the sight afforded her.

While he was thus engaged, Kit made some anxious inquiries about his employers, and whether they had expressed any opinion about him: but all he could learn was, that Mr. Abel had himself broken the intelligence to his mother with great kindness and delicacy late on the previous night, but had himself expressed no opinion of his innocence or guilt. Kit was on the point of mustering courage to ask Barbara's mother about Barbara, when the turnkey who had conducted him re-appeared, a second turnkey appeared behind his visitors, and the third turnkey with the newspaper cried "Time's up!"—adding in the same breath "Now for the next party," and then plunging deep into his newspaper again. Kit was taken off in an instant, with a blessing from his mother, and a scream from little Jacob, ringing in his ears. As he was crossing the next yard with the basket in his hand, under the guidance of his former conductor, another officer called to them to stop, and came up with a pint-pot of porter in his hand.

"This is Christopher Nubbles, isn't it, that come in last night for felony?" said the man.

His comrade replied that this was the chicken in question.

"Then here's your beer," said the other man to Christopher. "What are you looking at? There an't a discharge in it."

"I beg your pardon," said Kit. "Who sent it me?"

"Why, your friend," replied the man. "You're to have it every day, he says. And so you will, if he pays for it."

"My friend!" repeated Kit.

"You're all abroad, seemingly," returned the other man. "There's his letter. Take hold."

Kit took it, and when he was locked up again, read as follows:

"Drink of this cup. You'll find there's a spell in its every drop 'gainst the ills of mortality. Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen! *Her* cup was a fiction, but this is reality (Barclay and Co.'s). If they ever send it in a flat state, complain to the Governor. Yours R. S."

"R. S.!" said Kit, after some consideration. "It must be Mr. Richard Swiveller. Well, it's very kind of him, and I thank him heartily!"

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-SECOND.

A FAINT light, twinkling from the window of the counting-house on Quilp's wharf, and looking inflamed and red through the night-fog, as though it suffered from it like an eye, forewarned Mr. Sampson Brass, as he approached the wooden cabin with a cautious step, that the excellent proprietor, his esteemed client, was inside, and probably waiting with his accustomed patience and sweetness of temper the fulfilment of the appointment which now brought Mr. Brass within his fair domain.

"A treacherous place to pick one's steps in of a dark night," muttered Sampson, as he stumbled for the twentieth time over some stray lumber, and limped in pain. "I believe that boy strews the ground differently every day, on purpose to bruise and maim one; unless his master does it with his own hands, which is more than likely. I hate to come to this place without Sally. She's more protection than a dozen men."

As he paid this compliment to the merit of the absent charmer, Mr. Brass came to a halt; looking doubtfully towards the light, and over his shoulder.

"What's he about, I wonder?" murmured the lawyer, standing on tiptoe and endeavouring to obtain a glimpse of what was passing inside, which at that distance was impossible—"drinking, I suppose,—making himself more fiery and furious, and heating his malice and mischievousness till they boil. I'm always afraid to come here by myself, when his account's a pretty large one. I don't believe he'd mind throttling me, and dropping me softly into the river when the tide was at its strongest, any more than he'd mind killing a rat—indeed I don't know whether he wouldn't consider it a pleasant joke. Hark! Now he's singing."

Mr. Quilp was certainly entertaining himself with vocal exercise, but it was rather a kind of chant than a song; being a monotonous repetition of one sentence in a very rapid manner, with a long stress upon the last word, which he swelled into a dismal roar. Nor did the burden of this performance bear any reference to love, or war, or wine, or loyalty, or any other, the standard topics of song, but to a subject not often set to music or generally known in ballads; the words being these:—"The worthy magistrate, after remarking that the prisoner would find some difficulty in persuading a jury to believe his tale, committed him to take his trial at the approaching sessions; and directed the customary recognizances to be entered into for the pros-e-cu-tion."

Every time he came to this concluding word, and had exhausted all possible stress upon it, Quilp burst into a shriek of laughter, and began again.

"He's dreadfully imprudent," muttered Brass, after he had listened to two or three repetitions of the chant. "Horribly imprudent. I wish he was dumb. I wish he was deaf. I wish he was blind. Hang him," cried Brass, as the chant began again "I wish he was dead."

Giving utterance to these friendly aspirations in behalf of his client, Mr. Sampson composed his face into its usual state of smoothness, and waiting until the shriek came again and was dying away, went up to the wooden house, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried the dwarf.

"How do you do to-night sir?" said Sampson, peeping in. "Ha ha ha! How do you do sir? Oh dear me, how very whimsical! Amazingly whimsical to be sure!"

"Come in, you fool," returned the dwarf, "and don't stand there shaking your head and showing your teeth. Come in, you false witness, you perjurer, you suborner of evidence, come in!"

"He has the richest humour!" cried Brass shutting the door behind him; "the most amazing vein of comicality! But is n't it *rather* injudicious sir—?"

"What?" demanded Quilp. "What, Judas?"

"Judas!" cried Brass. "He has such extraordinary spirits! His humour is so extremely playful! Judas! Oh yes—dear me, how very good! Ha ha ha!"

All this time Sampson was rubbing his hands, and staring with ludicrous surprise and dismay, at a great, goggle-eyed, blunt-nosed figure-head of some old ship, which was reared up against the wall in a corner near the stove, looking like a goblin or hideous idol whom the dwarf worshipped. A mass of timber on its head, carved into the dim and distant semblance of a cocked hat, together with a representation of a star on the left breast and epaulettes on the

shoulders, denoted that it was intended for the effigy of some famous admiral; but without those helps, any observer might have supposed it the authentic portrait of a distinguished merman, or great sea-monster. Being originally much too large for the apartment which it was now employed to decorate, it had been sawn short off at the waist. Even in this state it reached from floor to ceiling; and thrusting itself forward with that excessively wide-awake aspect, and air of somewhat obtrusive politeness, by which figure-heads are usually characterized, seemed to reduce everything else to mere pigmy proportions.

"Do you know it?" said the dwarf, watching Sampson's eyes. "Do you see the likeness?"

"Eh?" said Brass, holding his head on ne side, and throwing it a little back, as connoisseurs do. "Now I look at it again, I fancy I see a—yes, there certainly is something in the smile that reminds me of —and yet upon my word I—"

Now, the fact was, that Sampson, having never seen anything in the smallest degree resembling this substantial phantom, was much perplexed; being uncertain whether Mr. Quilp considered it like himself, and had therefore bought it for a family portrait; or whether he was pleased to consider it as the likeness of some enemy. He was not very long in doubt; for, while he was surveying it with that knowing look which people assume when they are contemplating for the first time portraits which they ought to recognise but don't, the dwarf threw down the newspaper from which he had been chanting the words already quoted, and seizing a rusty iron bar, which he used in lieu of poker, dealt the figure such a stroke on the nose, that it rocked again.

"Is it like Kit—is it his picture, his image, his very self!" cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance, and covering it with deep dimples. "Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog—is it—is it—is it!" And with every repetition of the question, he battered the great image until the perspiration streamed down his face with the violence of the exercise.

Although this might have been a very comical thing to look at from a secure gallery, as a bull-fight is found to be a comfortable spectacle by those who are not in the arena, and a house on fire is better than a play to people who don't live near it, there was something in the earnestness of Mr. Quilp's manner which made his legal adviser feel that the counting-house was a

little too small, and a great deal too lonely, for the due enjoyment of these humours. Therefore he stood as far off as he could while the dwarf was thus engaged; whimpering out but feeble applause, and when he left off and sat down again from pure exhaustion, approached with more obsequiousness than ever.

"Excellent, indeed!" cried Brass. "He he! Oh, very good sir. You know," said Sampson, looking round as if in appeal to the bruised admiral, "he's quite a remarkable man—quite!"

"Sit down," said the dwarf. "I bought the dog yesterday. I've been screwing gimlets into him, and sticking forks in his eyes, and cutting my name on him. I mean to burn him at last."

"Ha, ha!" cried Brass. "Extremely entertaining, indeed!"

"Come here!" said Quilp, beckoning him to draw near. "What's injudicious, hey?"

"Nothing sir—nothing. Scarcely worth mentioning sir; but I thought that song—admirably humorous in itself, you know—was perhaps rather—"

"Yes," said Quilp, "rather what?"

"Just bordering, or as one may say, remotely verging upon the confines of injudiciousness perhaps, sir," returned Brass, looking timidly at the dwarf's cunning eyes, which were turned towards the fire, and reflected its red light.

"Why?" inquired Quilp, without looking up.

"Why, you know, sir," returned Brass, venturing to be more familiar; "—the fact is sir, that any allusion to those little combinings together of friends for objects in themselves extremely laudable, but which the law terms conspiracies, are—you take me, sir?—best kept snug and among friends, you know."

"Eh!" said Quilp, looking up with a perfectly vacant countenance. "What do you mean?"

"Cautious, exceedingly cautious, very right and proper!" cried Brass, nodding his head. "Mum sir, even here—my meaning sir, exactly."

"*Your* meaning exactly, you brazen scarecrow,—what's your meaning?" retorted Quilp. "Why do you talk to me of combining together? Do *I* combine? Do I know anything about your combinings?"

"No no, sir—certainly not; not by any means," returned Brass.

"If you so wink and nod at me," said the dwarf, looking about him as if for his poker, "I'll spoil the expression of your monkey's face, I will."

"Don't put yourself out of the way I beg sir," rejoined Brass, checking himself with great alacrity. "You're quite right sir, quite right. I shouldn't have mentioned the subject sir. It's much better not to. You're quite right sir. Let us change it, if you please. You were asking, sir, Sally told me, about our lodger. He has not returned sir."

"No?" said Quilp, heating some rum in a little saucepan, and watching to prevent its boiling over. "Why not?"

"Why sir," returned Brass, "he—dear me, Mr. Quilp, sir"—

"What's the matter?" said the dwarf, stopping his hand in the act of carrying the saucepan to his mouth.

"You have forgotten the water, sir," said Brass. "And—excuse me sir—but it's burning hot."

Deigning no other than a practical answer to this remonstrance, Mr. Quilp raised the hot saucepan to his lips, and deliberately drank off all the spirit it contained; which might have been in quantity about half a pint, and had been but a moment before, when he took it off the fire, bubbling and hissing fiercely. Having swallowed this gentle stimulant and shaken his fist at the admiral, he bade Mr. Brass proceed.

"But first," said Quilp, with his accustomed grin, "have a drop yourself—a nice drop—a good, warm, fiery drop."

"Why, sir," replied Brass; "if there was such a thing as a mouthful of water that could be got without trouble—"

"There's no such thing to be had here," cried the dwarf. "Water for lawyers! Melted lead and brimstone you mean, nice hot blistering pitch and tar—that's the thing for them—eh Brass, eh?"

"Ha ha ha!" laughed Mr. Brass. "Oh very biting! and yet it's like being tickled—there's a pleasure in it too, sir!"

"Drink that," said the dwarf, who had by this time heated some more. "Toss it off, don't leave any heeltap, scorch your throat and be happy."

The wretched Sampson took a few short sips of the liquor, which immediately distilled itself into burning tears, and in that form came rolling down his cheeks into the pipkin again, turning the colour of his face and eyelids to a deep red, and giving rise to a violent fit of coughing, in the midst of which he was still heard to declare, with the constancy of a martyr, that it was "beautiful indeed!" While he was yet in unspeakable agonies, the dwarf renewed their conversation.

"The lodger," said Quilp,—"what about him?"

"He is still sir," returned Brass, with intervals of coughing, "stopping with the

Garland family. He has only been home once, sir, since the day of the examination of that culprit. He informed Mr. Richard, sir, that he couldn't bear the house after what had taken place; that he was wretched in it; and that he looked upon himself as being in a certain kind of way the cause of the occurrence. A very excellent lodger sir. I hope we may not lose him."

"Yah!" cried the dwarf. "Never thinking of any body but yourself—why don't you retrench then—scrape up, hoard, economize, eh?"

"Why sir," replied Brass, "upon my word I think Sarah's as good an economizer as any going. I do indeed, Mr. Quilp."

"Moisten your clay, wet the other eye, drink, man," cried the dwarf. "You took a clerk to oblige me."

"Delighted sir, I am sure, at any time," replied Sampson. "Yes sir, I did."

"Then, now you may discharge him," said Quilp. "There's a means of retrenchment for you at once."

"Discharge Mr. Richard, sir?" cried Brass.

"Have you more than one clerk, you parrot, that you ask the question? Yes."

"Upon my word sir," said Brass. "I wasn't prepared for this—"

"How could you be?" sneered the dwarf, "when *I* wasn't? How often am I to tell you that I brought him to you that I might always have my eye on him and know where he was—and that I had a plot, a scheme, a little quiet piece of enjoyment afoot, of which the very cream and essence was, that this old man and grandchild (who have sunk underground I think) should be, while he and his precious friend believed them rich, in reality as poor as frozen rats!"

"I quite understood that sir," rejoined Brass. "Thoroughly."

"Well sir," retorted Quilp, "and do you understand now, that they're *not* poor—that they can't be, if they have such men as your lodger searching for them and scouring the country far and wide."

"Of course I do sir," said Sampson.

"Of course you do," retorted the dwarf, viciously snapping at his words. "Of course do you understand then, that it's no matter what comes of this fellow? of course do you understand that for any other purpose, he's no man for me, nor for you?"

"I have frequently said to Sarah sir," returned Brass, "that he was of no use at all in the business. You can't put any confidence in him sir. If you'll believe me, I've found that fellow, in the commonest little matters of the office that have been trusted to him, blurting out the truth, though expressly cautioned. The aggravation of that chap sir, has exceeded any thing you can imagine, it has indeed. Nothing but the respect and obligation I owe to you sir—"

As it was plain that Sampson was bent on a complimentary harangue, unless he received a timely interruption, Mr. Quilp politely tapped him on the crown of his head with the little saucepan, and requested that he would be so obliging as to hold his peace.

"Practical, sir, practical," said Brass, rubbing the place and smiling; "but still extremely pleasant—immensely so!"

"Hearken to me, will you?" returned Quilp, "or I'll be a little more pleasant, presently. There's no chance of his comrade and friend returning. The scamp has been obliged to fly, as I learn, for some knavery, and has found his way abroad Let him rot there."

"Certainly, sir. Quite proper. Forcible!" cried Brass, glancing at the admiral again, as if he made a third in company "Extremely forcible!"

"I hate him," said Quilp between his teeth, "and have always hated him, for family reasons. Besides, he was an intractable ruffian; otherwise *he* would have been of use. This fellow is pigeon-hearted, and light-headed. I don't want him any longer. Let him hang or drown—starve—go to the devil."

"By all means, sir," returned Brass. "When would you wish him, sir, to—ha, ha!—to make that little excursion?"

"When this trial's over," said Quilp "As soon as that's ended, send him about his business."

"It shall be done, sir," returned Brass; "by all means. It will be rather a blow to Sarah, sir, but she has all her feelings under control. Ah, Mr. Quilp, I often think sir, if it had only pleased Providence to bring you and Sarah together in earlier life, what blessed results would have flowed from such a union. You never saw our dear father, sir? A charming gentleman. Sarah was his pride and joy, sir. He would have closed his eyes in bliss, would Foxey, Mr. Quilp, if he could have found her such a partner. You esteem her, sir?"

"I love her," croaked the dwarf.

"You're very good, sir," returned Brass, "I am sure. Is there any other order, sir, that I can take a note of, besides this little matter of Mr. Richard?"

"None," replied the dwarf, seizing the saucepan. "Let us drink the lovely Sarah."

"If we could do it in something, sir that wasn't quite boiling," suggested Brass

humbly, "perhaps it would be better. I think it will be more agreeable to her feelings, when she comes to hear from me of the honour you have done her, if she learns it was in liquor rather cooler than the last, sir."

But to these remonstrances, Mr. Quilp turned a deaf ear. Sampson Brass, who was by this time anything but sober, being compelled to take further draughts of the same strong bowl, found that, instead of at all contributing to his recovery, they had the novel effect of making the counting-house spin round and round with extreme velocity, and causing the floor and ceiling to heave in a very distressing manner. After a brief stupor, he awoke to a consciousness of being partly under the table, and partly under the grate. This position not being the most comfortable one he could have chosen for himself, he managed to stagger to his feet, and holding on by the admiral, looked round for his host.

Mr. Brass's first impression was, that his host was gone and had left him there alone —perhaps locked him in for the night. A strong smell of tobacco, however, suggesting a new train of ideas, he looked upwards, and saw that the dwarf was smoking in his hammock.

"Good bye, sir," cried Brass faintly. "Good bye, sir."

"Won't you stop all night?"—said the dwarf, peeping out. "Do stop all night."

"I couldn't indeed, sir," replied Brass, who was almost dead from nausea and the closeness of the room. "If you'd have the goodness to show me a light, so that I may see my way across the yard, sir—"

Quilp was out in an instant; not with his legs first, or his head first, or his arms first, but bodily—altogether.

"To be sure," he said, taking up a lantern, which was now the only light in the place. "Be careful how you go, my dear friend. Be sure to pick your way among the timber, for all the rusty nails are up wards. There's a dog in the lane. He bit a man last night, and a woman the night before, and last Tuesday he killed a child —but that was in play. Don't go too near him."

"Which side of the road is he, sir?" asked Brass, in great dismay.

"He lives on the right hand," said Quilp, "but sometimes he hides on the left, ready for a spring. He's uncertain in that respect. Mind you take care of yourself. I'll never forgive you if you don't.— There's the light out—never mind—you know the way—straight on!"

Quilp had slyly shaded the light by holding it against his breast, and now stood chuckling and shaking from head to foot in a rapture of delight, as he heard the lawyer stumbling up the yard, and now and then falling heavily down. At length, however, he got quit of the place, and was out of hearing.

The dwarf shut himself up again, and sprung once more into his hammock.

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-THIRD.

The professional gentleman who had given Kit that consolatory piece of information relative to the settlement of his trifle of business at the Old Bailey, and the probability of its being very soon disposed of, turned out to be quite correct in his prognostications. In eight days' time, the sessions commenced. In one day afterwards, the Grand Jury found a True Bill against Christopher Nubbles for felony; and in two days from that finding, the aforesaid Christopher Nubbles was called upon to plead Guilty or Not Guilty to an Indictment for that he the said Christopher did feloniously abstract and steal from the dwelling-house and office of one Sampson Brass, gentleman, one Bank Note for Five Pounds issued by the Governor and Company of the Bank of England; in contravention of the Statutes in that case made and provided, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his crown, and dignity.

To this indictment, Christopher Nubbles, in a low and trembling voice, pleaded Not Guilty: and here let those who are in the habit of forming hasty judgments from appearances, and who would have had Christopher, if innocent, speak out very strong

and loud, observe, that confinement and anxiety will subdue the stoutest hearts; and that to one who has been close shut up, though it be only for ten or eleven days, seeing but stone walls and a very few stone faces, the sudden entrance into a great hall filled with life, is a rather disconcerting and startling circumstance. To this it must be added, that life in a wig is to a large class of people much more terrifying and impressive than life with its own head of hair; and if, in addition to these considerations, there be further taken into account Kit's natural emotion on seeing the two Mr. Garlands and the little Notary looking on with pale and anxious faces, it will perhaps seem a matter of no very great wonder that he should have been rather out of sorts, and unable to make himself exactly at home.

Although he had never seen either of the Mr. Garlands, or Mr. Witherden, since the time of his arrest, he had been given to understand that they had employed counsel for him. Therefore, when one of the gentlemen in wigs got up and said "I am for the prisoner my Lord," Kit made him a bow; and when another gentleman in a wig got up and said "And I'm against him my Lord," Kit trembled very much, and bowed to him too. And didn't he hope in his own heart that his gentleman was a match for the other gentleman, and would make him ashamed of himself in no time!

The gentleman who was against him had to speak first and being in dreadfully good spirits (for he had, in the last trial, very nearly procured the acquittal of a young gentleman who had had the misfortune to murder his father) he spoke up you may be sure; telling the Jury that if they acquitted this prisoner they must expect to suffer no less pangs and agonies than he had told the other Jury they would certainly undergo if they convicted that prisoner. And when he had told them all about the case, and that he had never known a worse case, he stopped a little while, like a man who had something terrible to tell them, and then said that he understood an attempt would be made by his learned friend (and here he looked sideways at Kit's gentleman) to impeach the testimony of those immaculate witnesses whom he should call before them; but he did hope and trust that his learned friend would have a greater respect and veneration for the character of the prosecutor; than whom, as he well knew, there did not exist, and never had existed, a more honourable member of that most honourable profession to which he was attached. And then he said, did the jury know Bevis Marks? And if they did know Bevis Marks (as he trusted, for their own characters, they did) did they know the historical and elevating associations connected with that most remarkable spot? Did they believe that a man like Brass could reside in a place like Bevis Marks, and not be a virtuous and most upright character? And when he had said a great deal to them on this point, he remembered that it was an insult to their understandings to make any remarks on what they must have felt so strongly without him, and therefore called Sampson Brass into the witness-box, straightway.

Then up comes Mr. Brass, very brisk and fresh; and having bowed to the judge, like a man who has had the pleasure of seeing him before, and who hopes he has been pretty well since their last meeting, folds his arms, and looks at his gentleman as much as to say "Here I am—full of evidence—Tap me!" And the gentleman does tap him presently, and with great discretion too; drawing off the evidence by little and little, and making it run quite clear and bright in the eyes of all present. Then Kit's gentleman takes him in hand, but can make nothing of him; and after a great many very long questions and very short answers, Mr. Sampson Brass goes down in glory.

To him succeeds Sarah, who in like manner is easy to be managed by Mr. Brass's gentleman, but very obdurate to Kit's. In short, Kit's gentleman can get nothing out of her but a repetition of what she has said before (only a little stronger this time, as against his client), and therefore lets her go, in some confusion. Then Mr. Brass's gentleman calls Richard Swiveller, and Richard Swiveller appears accordingly.

Now Mr. Brass's gentleman has it whispered in his ear that this witness is disposed to be friendly to the prisoner—which, to say the truth, he is rather glad to hear, as his strength is considered to lie in what is familiarly termed badgering. Wherefore he begins by requesting the officer to be quite sure that this witness kisses the book, and then goes to work at him, tooth and nail.

"Mr. Swiveller," says this gentleman to Dick, when he has told his tale with evident reluctance and a desire to make the best of it; "pray sir, where did you dine yesterday?"—"Where did I dine yesterday?"—"Ay sir, where did you dine yesterday—was it near here, sir?"—"Oh to be sure—yes—just over the way."—"To be sure. Yes. Just over the way,"—re-

peats Mr. Brass's gentleman, with a glance at the court—"Alone, sir?"—"I beg your pardon," says Mr. Swiveller, who has not caught the question—"*Alone*, sir!" repeats Mr. Brass's gentleman in a voice of thunder, "did you dine alone? Did you treat anybody, sir! Come."—"Oh yes to be sure—yes, I did," says Mr. Swiveller with a smile. "Have the goodness to banish a levity, sir, which is very ill-suited to the place in which you stand (though perhaps you have reason to be thankful that it 's only that place),"—says Mr. Brass's gentleman, with a nod of the head, insinuating that the dock is Mr. Swiveller's legitimate sphere of action; "and attend to me. You were waiting about here yesterday in expectation that this trial was coming on. You dined over the way. You treated somebody. Now, was that somebody brother to the prisoner at the bar?"—Mr. Swiveller is proceeding to explain—"Yes or No, sir," cried Mr. Brass's gentleman—"But will you allow me—"—"Yes or No, sir,"—"Yes it was, but—"—"Yes it was," cries the gentleman, taking him up short—"And a very pretty witness *you* are!"

Down sits Mr. Brass's gentleman. Kit's gentleman, not knowing how the matter really stands, is afraid to pursue the subject. Richard Swiveller retires abashed. Judge, jury, and spectators, have visions of his lounging about with an ill-looking, large-whiskered, dissolute young fellow of six feet high. The reality is, little Jacob, with the calves of his legs exposed to the open air, and himself tied up in a shawl. Nobody knows the truth, everybody believes a falsehood—and all because of the ingenuity of Mr. Brass's gentleman!

Then come the witnesses to character, and here Mr. Brass's gentleman shines again. It turns out that Mr. Garland has had no character with Kit, no recommendation of him but from his own mother, and that he was suddenly dismissed by his former master for unknown reasons. "Really Mr. Garland," says Mr. Brass's gentleman, "for a person who has arrived at your time of life, you are, to say the least of it, singularly indiscreet, I think." The Jury think so too, and find Kit guilty. He is taken off, humbly protesting his innocence. The spectators settle themselves in their places with renewed attention, for there are several female witnesses to be examined in the next case, and it has been rumoured that Mr. Brass's gentleman will make great fun in cross-examining them for the prisoner.

Kit's mother, poor woman, is waiting at he grate below stairs, accompanied by Barbara's mother (who, honest soul! never does anything but cry, and hold the baby), and a sad interview ensues. The newspaper-reading turnkey has told them all. He don't think it will be transportation for life, because there 's time to prove the good character yet, and that is sure to serve him. He wonders what he did it for. "He never did it!" cries Kit's mother. "Well," says the turnkey, "I won't contradict you. It 's all one now, whether he did or not."

Kit's mother can reach his hand through the bars, and clasps it—God, and those to whom he has given such tenderness, only know in how much agony. Kit bids her keep a good heart, and under pretence of having the children lifted up to kiss him, prays Barbara's mother in a whisper to take her home.

"Some friend will rise up for us, mother," cries Kit, "I am sure. If not now, before long. My innocence will come out, mother, and I shall be brought back again; I feel a confidence in that. You must teach little Jacob and the baby how all this was, for if they thought I had ever been dishonest, when they grew old enough to understand, it would break my heart to know it, if I was thousands of miles away. Oh! is there no good gentleman here, who will take care of her!"

The hand slips out of his, for the poor creature sinks down upon the earth, insensible. Richard Swiveller comes hastily up, elbows the bystanders out of the way, takes her, (after some trouble) in one arm after the manner of theatrical ravishers, and nodding to Kit, and commanding Barbara's mother to follow, for he has a coach waiting, bears her swiftly off.

Well; Richard took her home. And what astonishing absurdities in the way of quotation from song and poem, he perpetrated on the road, no man knows. He took her home, and staid till she was recovered; and having no money to pay the coach, went back in state to Bevis Marks, bidding the driver (for it was Saturday night) wait at the door while he went in for "change."

"Mr. Richard sir," said Brass cheerfully, "Good evening."

Monstrous as Kit's tale had appeared at first, Mr. Richard did, that night, half suspect his affable employer of some deep villany. Perhaps it was but the misery he had just witnessed which gave his careless nature this impulse; but be that as it may, it was very strong upon him, and he said in as few words as possible, what he wanted.

"Money!" cried Brass, taking out his purse. "Ha ha! To be sure Mr. Rich

ard, to be sure sir. All men must live. You haven't change for a five pound note, have you sir?

"No," returned Dick, shortly.

"Oh!" said Brass, "here's the very sum. That saves trouble. You're very welcome I'm sure. Mr. Richard, sir—"

Dick, who had by this time reached the door, turned round.

"You needn't," said Brass, "trouble yourself to come back any more, sir."

"Eh?"

"You see, Mr. Richard," said Brass, thrusting his hands in his pockets and rocking himself to and fro upon his stool, "the fact is, that a man of your abilities is lost, quite lost, in our dry and mouldy line.—It's terrible drudgery,—shocking. I should say now that the stage, or the—or the army, Mr. Richard, or something very superior in the licensed victualling way, was the kind of thing that would call out the genius of such a man as you. I hope you'll look in to see us now and then. Sally, sir, will be delighted I'm sure. She's extremely sorry to lose you, Mr. Richard, but a sense of her duty to society reconciles her. An amazing creature that, sir!—You'll find the money quite correct, I think. There's a cracked window sir, but I've not made any deduction on that account. Whenever we part with friends, Mr. Richard, let us part liberally. A delightful sentiment sir!"

To all these rambling observations, Mr. Swiveller answered not one word, but returning for the aquatic jacket, rolled it into a tight round ball, looking steadily at Brass meanwhile as if he had some intention of bowling him down with it. He only took it under his arm, however, and marched out of the office in profound silence. Directly he had closed the door, he opened it; stared in again for a few moments with the same portentous gravity; and nodding his head once, in a slow and ghost-like manner, vanished.

He paid the coachman and turned his back on Bevis Marks, big with great designs for the comforting of Kit's mother, and the aid of Kit himself.

But the lives of gentlemen devoted to such pleasures as Richard Swiveller's, are extremely precarious. The spiritual excitement of the last fortnight, working upon a system affected in no slight degree by the spirituous excitement of some years, proved a little too much for him. That very night, Mr. Richard was seized with an alarming illness, and in twenty-four hours was stricken with a raging fever.

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-FOURTH.

Tossing to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling for ever through deserts of thought, where there was no resting-place, no sight or sound suggestive of refreshment or repose, nothing but a dull eternal weariness, with no change but the restless shiftings of his miserable body, and the weary wanderings of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety—to a sense of something left undone, of some fearful obstacle to be surmounted, of some irking care that would not be driven away, and haunted the distempered brain, now in this form, now in that—always shadowy and dim, but recognizable for the same phantom in every shape it took, darkening every vision like an evil conscience, and making slumber horrible; in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until at last, when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up, and to be held down by devils, he sunk into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more.

He awoke; and, with a sensation of most blissful rest, better than sleep itself, began gradually to remember something of these sufferings, and to think what a long night it had been, and whether he had not been delirious twice or thrice. Happening in the midst of these cogitations to raise his hand, he was astonished to find how heavy it seemed, and yet how thin and light it really was. Still he felt indifferent and happy; and having no curiosity to pursue the subject, remained in the same waking slumber, until his attention was attracted by a cough. This made him doubt whether he had locked his door last night, and feel a little surprised at having a companion in the room. Still, he lacked energy to follow up this train of thought; and unconsciously fell, in a luxury of repose, to staring at some green stripes upon the bed-furniture, and associating them strangely with patches of fresh turf, while the yellow ground between made gravel-walks, and so helped out a long perspective of trim gardens.

He was rambling in imagination upon these terraces, and had quite lost himself among them indeed, when he heard the cough once more. The walks shrunk into stripes again at the sound; and raising himself a little in the bed, and holding the curtain open with one hand, he looked out.

The same room certainly, and still by candle-light; but with what unbounded astonishment did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick chamber—all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there, when he went to bed! The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the—the what? The Marchioness? Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table. There she sat, intent upon her game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner, as if she feared to disturb him—shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging; going through all the mysteries of cribbage, as though she had been in full practice from her cradle!

Mr. Swiveller contemplated these things for a short time, and suffering the curtain to fall into its former position, laid his head upon the pillow again.

"I'm dreaming," thought Richard, "that's clear. When I went to bed, my hands were not made of egg-shells; and now I can almost see through 'em. If this is not a dream, I have woke up by mistake in an Arabian Night, instead of a London one. But I have no doubt I'm asleep. Not the least."

Here the small servant had another cough.

"Very remarkable!" thought Mr. Swiveller. "I never dreamt such a real cough as that, before. I don't know, indeed, that I ever dreamt either a cough or a sneeze. Perhaps it's part of the philosophy of dreams that one never does. There's another—and another—I say,—I'm dreaming rather fast."

For the purpose of testing his real condition, Mr. Swiveller, after some reflection, pinched himself in the arm.

"Queerer still!" he thought. "I came to bed rather plump than otherwise, and now there's nothing to lay hold of. I'll take another survey."

The result of this further inspection was, to convince Mr. Swiveller that the objects by which he was surrounded were real, and that he saw them, beyond all question, with his waking eyes.

"It 's an Arabian Night, that 's what it is," said Richard. "I 'm in Damascus or Grand Cairo. The Marchioness is a Genie, and having had a wager with another Genie, about who is the handsomest young man alive, and the worthiest to be the husband of the Princess of China, has brought me away, room and all, to compare us together. Perhaps," said Mr. Swiveller, turning languidly round upon his pillow, and looking on that side of his bed which was next the wall, "the Princess may be still—No, she 's gone."

Not feeling quite satisfied with this explanation, as, even taking it to be the correct one, it still involved a little mystery and doubt, Mr. Swiveller raised the curtain again, determined to take the first favourable opportunity of addressing his companion. An occasion soon presented itself. The Marchioness dealt, turned up a knave, and omitted to take the usual advantage; upon which Mr. Swiveller called out as loud as he could—"Two for his heels!"

The Marchioness jumped up quickly, and clapped her hands. "Arabian Night certainly," thought Mr. Swiveller; "they always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads."

It appeared, however, that she had only clapped her hands in joy; for directly afterwards, she began to laugh, and then to cry; declaring, not in choice Arabic, but in familiar English, that she was "so glad, she didn't know what to do."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully, "be pleased to draw nearer. First of all, will you have the goodness to inform me where I shall find my voice; and secondly, what has become of my flesh?"

The Marchioness only shook her head mournfully, and cried again; whereupon Mr. Swiveller (being very weak) felt his own eyes affected likewise.

"I begin to infer, from your manner, and these appearances, Marchioness," — said Richard, after a pause, and smiling with a trembling lip, "that I have been ill."

"You just have!" replied the small servant, wiping her eyes. "And haven't you been a talking nonsense!"

"Oh!" said Dick. "Very ill, Marchioness, have I been?"

"Dead, all but," replied the small servant. "I never thought you'd get better. Thank Heaven you have!"

Mr. Swiveller was silent for a long while. Bye and bye, he began to talk again — inquiring how long he had been there.

"Three weeks to-morrow," replied the small servant.

"Three what?" said Dick.

"Weeks," returned the Marchioness emphatically; "three long, slow, weeks."

The bare thought of having been in such extremity, caused Richard to fall into another silence, and to lie flat down again at his full length. The Marchioness, having arranged the bed-clothes more comfortably, and felt that his hands and forehead were quite cool — a discovery that filled her with delight—cried a little more, and then applied herself to getting tea ready, and making some thin dry toast.

While she was thus engaged, Mr. Swiveller looked on with a grateful heart, very much astonished to see how thoroughly at home she made herself, and attributing this attention, in its origin, to Sally Brass, whom, in his own mind, he could not thank enough. When the Marchioness had finished her toasting, she spread a clean cloth on a tray, and brought him some crisp slices and a great basin of weak tea, with which (she said) the doctor had left word he might refresh himself when he awoke. She propped him up with pillows, if not as skilfully as if she had been a professional nurse all her life, at least as tenderly; and looked on with unutterable satisfaction while the patient — stopping every now and then to shake her by the hand — took his poor meal with an appetite and relish, which the greatest dainties of the earth, under any other circumstances, would have failed to provoke. Having cleared away, and disposed everything comfortably about him again, she sat down at the table to take her own tea.

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "how's Sally?"

The small servant screwed her face into an expression of the very uttermost entanglement of slyness, and shook her head.

"What, haven't you seen her lately?" said Dick.

"Seen her!" cried the small servant. "Bless you, I've run away!"

Mr. Swiveller immediately laid himself down again quite flat, and so remained for about five minutes. By slow degrees he resumed his sitting posture after that lapse of time, and inquired:

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"

"Live!" cried the small servant. "Here!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Swiveller. And with that he fell down flat again, as suddenly as if he had been shot. Thus he remained, motionless and bereft of speech, until she had finished her meal, put everything in its place, and swept the hearth; when he motioned her to bring a chair to the bedside, and being propped up again, opened a farther conversation.

"And so," said Dick, "you have run away?"

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "and they've been a tizing of me."

"Been — I beg your pardon," said Dick —"what have they been doing?"

"Been a tizing of me—tizing you know — in the newspapers," rejoined the Marchioness.

"Ay, ay," said Dick, "advertising?"

The small servant nodded, and winked. Her eyes were so red with waking and crying, that the Tragic Muse might have winked with greater consistency. And so Dick felt.

"Tell me," said he, "how it was that you thought of coming here."

"Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I hadn't any friend at all, because the lodger he never come back, and I didn't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was—"

"Was near a keyhole?" suggested Mr. Swiveller, observing that she faltered.

"Well then," said the small servant, nodding; "when I was near the office keyhole—as you see me through, you know—I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you. Mr. Brass, he says, 'It's no business of mine;' and Miss Sally, she says, 'He's a funny chap, but it's no business of mine;' and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I run away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I've been here ever since."

"This poor little Marchioness has been wearing herself to death!" cried Dick.

"No I haven't," she returned, "not a bit of it. Don't you mind about me. I like sitting up, and I've often had a sleep, bless you, in one of them chairs. But if you had seen how you tried to jump out o' winder, and if you could have heard how you used to keep on singing and making speeches, you wouldn't have believed it—I'm so glad you're better, Mr Liverer."

"Liverer, indeed!" said Dick thoughtfully. "It's well I *am* a liverer. I strongly suspect I should have died, Marchioness, but for you."

At this point, Mr. Swiveller took the small servant's hand in his again, and being, as we have seen, but poorly, might in struggling to express his thanks have made his eyes as red as hers, but that she quickly changed the theme by making him lie down, and urging him to keep very quiet.

"The doctor," she told him, "said you must be kept quite still, and there was to be no noise nor nothing. Now, take a rest, and then we'll talk again. I'll sit by you, you know. If you shut your eyes, perhaps you'll go to sleep. You'll be all the better for it, if you do."

The Marchioness, in saying these words, brought a little table to the bed-side, took her seat at it, and began to work away at the concoction of some cooling drink, with the address of a score of chemists. Richard Swiveller, being indeed fatigued, fell into a slumber, and waking in about half an hour, inquired what time it was.

"Just gone half after six," replied his small friend, helping him to sit up again.

"Marchioness," said Richard, passing his hand over his forehead and turning suddenly round, as though the subject but that moment flashed upon him, "what has become of Kit?"

He had been sentenced to transportation for a great many years, she said.

"Has he gone?" asked Dick—"his mother — how is she, — what has become of her?"

His nurse shook her head, and answered that she knew nothing about them. "But, if I thought," said she, very slowly, "that you'd keep quiet, and not put yourself into another fever, I could tell you—but I won't now."

"Yes, do," said Dick. "It will amuse me."

"Oh! would it though?" rejoined the small servant, with a horrified look, "I know better than that. Wait till you're better, and then I'll tell you."

Dick looked very earnestly at his little friend: and his eyes being large and hollow from illness assisted the expression so much, that she was quite frightened, and besought him not to think any more about it. What had already fallen from her, however, had not only piqued his curiosity, but seriously alarmed him, wherefore he urged her to tell him the worst at once.

"Oh! there's no worst in it," said the small servant. "It hasn't anything to do with you."

"Has it anything to do with — is it anything you heard through chinks or key holes — and that you were not intended to hear?" asked Dick, in a breathless state.

"Yes," replied the small servant.

"In — in Bevis Marks?" pursued Dick hastily. "Conversations between Brass and Sally?"

"Yes," cried the small servant again.

Richard Swiveller thrust his lank arm out of bed, and griping her by the wrist and drawing her close to him, bade her out with it, and freely too, or he would not answer for the consequences; being wholly unable to endure that state of excitement and expectation. She, seeing that he was greatly agitated, and that the effects of postponing her revelation might be much more injurious than any that were likely to ensue from its being made at once, promised compliance, on condition that the patient kept himself perfectly quiet, and abstained from starting up or tossing about.

"But if you begin to do that," said the small servant, "I'll leave off. And so I tell you."

"You can't leave off till you have gone on," said Dick. "And do go on, there's a darling. Speak, sister, speak. Pretty Polly say—Oh tell me when, and tell me where, pray Marchioness, I beseech you."

Unable to resist these fervent adjurations, which Richard Swiveller poured out as passionately as if they had been of the most solemn and tremendous nature his companion spoke thus:

"Well! Before I run away, I used to sleep in the kitchen — where we played cards, you know. Miss Sally used to keep the key of the kitchen-door in her pocket, and she always came down at night to take away the candle and rake out the fire. When she had done that, she left me to go to bed in the dark, locked the door on the outside, put the key in her pocket again, and kept me locked up till she came down in the morning — very early I can tell you —and let me out. I was terrible afraid of being kept like this, because if there was a fire, I thought they might forget me and only take care of themselves you know. So whenever I see an old rusty key anywhere, I picked it up and tried if it would fit the door, and at last I found in the dust cellar a key that *did* fit it."

Here Mr. Swiveller made a violent demonstration with his legs. But the small servant immediately pausing in her talk, he subsided again, and pleading a momentary forgetfulness of their compact, entreated her to proceed.

"They kept me very short," said the small servant. "Oh! you can't think how short they kept me. So I used to come

out at night after they'd gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sangwitches that you'd left in the office, or even pieces of orange peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange peel and water?"

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had never tasted that ardent liquor; and once more urged his friend to resume the thread of her narrative.

"If you make believe very much, it's quite nice," said the small servant; "but if you don't, you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning, certainly. Well, sometimes I used to come out after they'd gone to bed, and sometimes before, you know; and one or two nights before there was all that precious noise in the office—when the young man was took I mean—I come up stairs while Mr. Brass and Miss Sally was a sittin' at the office fire; and I'll tell you the truth, that I come to listen again, about the key of the safe."

Mr. Swiveller gathered up his knees so as to make a great cone of the bed-clothes, and conveyed into his countenance an expression of the utmost concern. But the small servant pausing, and holding up her finger, the cone gently disappeared, though the look of concern did not.

"There was him and her," said the small servant, "a sittin' by the fire, and talking softly together. Mr. Brass says to Miss Sally, 'Upon my word,' he says, 'it's a dangerous thing, and it might get us into a world of trouble, and I don't half like it.' She says—you know her way—she says, 'You're the chickenest-hearted, feeblest, faintest man I ever see, and I think,' she says, 'that I ought to have been the brother, and you the sister. Isn't Quilp,' she says, 'our principal support?' 'He certainly is,' says Mr. Brass. 'And an't we,' she says, 'constantly ruining somebody or other in the way of business?' 'We certainly are,' says Mr. Brass. 'Then does it signify,' she says, 'about ruining this Kit when Quilp desires it?' 'It certainly does not signify,' says Brass. Then they whispered and laughed for a long time about there being no danger if it was well done, and then Mr. Brass pulls out his pocket-book, and says, 'Well,' he says, 'here is—Quilp's own five-pound note. We'll agree that way, then,' he says. 'Kit's coming to-morrow morning, I know. While he's up stairs, you'll get out of the way, and I'll clear off Mr. Richard. Having Kit alone, I'll hold him in conversation, and put this property in his hat. I'll manage so, besides,' he says, 'that Mr. Richard shall find it there, and be the evidence. And if that don't get Christopher out of Mr. Quilp's way, and satisfy Mr. Quilp's grudges,' he says, 'the Devil's in it.' Miss Sally laughed, and said that was a good plan, and as they seemed to be moving away, and I was afraid to stop any longer, I went down stairs again.—There!"

The small servant had gradually worked herself into as much agitation as Mr. Swiveller, and therefore made no effort to restrain him when he sat up in bed and hastily demanded whether this story had been told to anybody.

"How could it be?" replied his nurse. "I was almost afraid to think about it, and hoped the young man would be let off. When I heard 'em say they had found him guilty of what he didn't do, you was gone, and so was the lodger—though I think I should have been frightened to tell him, even if he'd been there. Ever since I come here, you've been out of your senses, and what would have been the good of telling you then?"

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, plucking off his nightcap and flinging it to the other end of the room; "if you'll do me the favour to retire for a few minutes and see what sort of a night it is, I'll get up."

"You mustn't think of such a thing," cried his nurse.

"I must indeed," said the patient, looking round the room. "Whereabouts are my clothes?"

"Oh I'm so glad—you havn't got any," replied the Marchioness.

"Ma'am!" said Mr. Swiveller, in great astonishment.

"I've been obliged to sell them every one, to get the things that were ordered for you. But don't take on about that," urged the Marchioness, as Dick fell back upon his pillow. "You're too weak to stand, indeed."

"I am afraid," said Richard dolefully, "that you're right. What ought I to do! what is to be done!"

It naturally occurred to him upon very little reflection, that the first step to take would be to communicate with one of the Mr. Garlands instantly. It was very possible that Mr. Abel had not yet left the office. In as little time as it takes to tell it, the small servant had the address in pencil on a piece of paper; a verbal description of father and son, which would enable her to recognize either without difficulty; and a special caution to be shy of Mr. Chuckster, in consequence of that gentleman's known antipathy to Kit. Armed with these slender powers, she hurried away, commissioned to bring either old Mr. Garland or Mr. Abel, bodily, to that apartment.

"I suppose," said Dick, as she closed the

door slowly, and peeped into the room again to make sure that he was comfortable, "I suppose there's nothing left — not so much as a waistcoat even?"

"No, nothing."

"It 's embarrassing," said Mr. Swiveller, "in case of fire—even an umbrella would be something — but you did quite right, dear Marchioness. I should have died without you."

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-FIFTH.

It was well for the small servant that she was of a sharp, quick nature, or the consequence of sending her out alone, from the very neighbourhood in which it was most dangerous for her to appear, would probably have been the restoration of Miss Sally Brass to the supreme authority over her person. Not unmindful of the risk she ran, however, the Marchioness no sooner left the house than she dived into the first dark by-way that presented itself, and without any present reference to the point to which her journey tended, made it her first business to put two good miles of brick and mortar between herself and Bevis Marks.

When she had accomplished this object, she began to shape her course for the notary's office, to which—shrewdly inquiring of apple-women, and oyster-sellers, at street-corners, rather than in lighted shops, or of well-dressed people, at the hazard of attracting notice — she easily procured a direction. As carrier-pigeons, on being first let loose in a strange place, beat the air at random for a short time, before darting off towards the spot for which they are designed, so did the Marchioness flutter round and round, until she believed herself in safety, and then bear swiftly down upon the port for which she was bound.

She had no bonnet—nothing on her head but a great cap, which in some old time had been worn by Sally Brass, whose taste in head-dresses was, as we have seen, peculiar—and her speed was rather retarded than assisted by her shoes, which, being extremely large and slipshod, flew off every now and then, and were difficult to find again among the crowd of passengers. Indeed the poor little creature experienced so much trouble and delay from having to grope for these articles of dress in mud and kennel, and suffered in these researches so much jostling, pushing, squeezing, and bandying from hand to hand, that by the time she reached the street, in which the notary lived, she was fairly worn out and exhausted, and could not refrain from tears

But to have got there at last, was a great comfort, especially as there were lights still burning in the office window, and therefore some hope that she was not too late. So the Marchioness dried her eyes, with the backs of her hands, and stealing softly up the steps, peeped in through the glass door.

Mr. Chuckster was standing behind the lid of his desk, making such preparations towards finishing off for the night, as pulling down his wristbands and pulling up his shirt-collar, settling his neck more gracefully in his stock, and secretly arranging his whiskers by the aid of a little triangular bit of looking-glass. Before the ashes of the fire stood two gentlemen, one of whom she rightly judged to be the notary, and the other (who was buttoning his great-coat, and was evidently about to depart immediately) Mr. Abel Garland.

Having made these observations, the small spy took counsel with herself, and resolved to wait in the street, until Mr Abel came out, as there would be then no fear of having to speak before Mr. Chuckster, and less difficulty in delivering her message. With this purpose she slipped out again, and crossing the road, sat down upon a door-step just opposite.

She had hardly taken this position, when there came dancing up the street, with his legs all wrong, and his head everywhere by turns, a pony. This pony had a little phaeton behind him, and a man in it; but neither man nor phaeton seemed to embarrass him in the least, as he reared up on his hind legs, or stopped, or went on, or stood still again, or backed, or went sideways, without the smallest reference to them, just as the fancy seized him, and as if he was the freest animal in the creation. When they came to the notary's door, the man called out in a very respectful manner, "Woa then," — intimating that if he might venture to express a wish, it would be that they stopped there. The pony made a moment's pause; but as if it occurred to him that to stop when he was re-

quired, might be to establish an inconvenient and dangerous precedent, he immediately started off again, rattled at a fast trot to the street-corner, wheeled round, came back, and then stopped of his own accord.

"Oh! you're a precious creatur!" said the man — who didn't venture by the bye to come out in his true colours, until he was safe upon the pavement. "I wish I had the rewarding of you,—I do."

"What has he been doing?" said Mr. Abel, tying a shawl round his neck, as he came down the steps.

"He's enough to fret a man's heart out," replied the hostler. "He is the most wicious rascal—Woa then, will you?"

"He'll never stand still, if you call him names," said Mr. Abel, getting in, and taking the reins. "He's a very good fellow, if you know how to manage him. This is the first time he has been out, this long while, for he has lost his old driver and wouldn't stir for anybody else, till this morning. The lamps are right, are they? That's well. Be here to take him to-morrow, if you please. Good night!"

And after one or two strange plunges, quite of his own invention, the pony yielded to Mr. Abel's mildness, and trotted gently off.

All this time Mr. Chuckster had been standing at the door, and the small servant had been afraid to approach. She had nothing for it now, therefore, but to run after the chaise, and call to Mr. Abel to stop. Being out of breath by the time she came up with it, she was unable to make him hear. The case was desperate; for the pony was quickening his pace. The Marchioness hung on behind for a few moments, and feeling that she could go no farther, and must soon yield, clambered by a vigorous effort into the hinder seat, and in so doing, lost one of the shoes for ever.

Mr. Abel being in a thoughtful frame of mind, and having quite enough to do, to keep the pony going, went jogging on without looking round, little dreaming of the strange figure that was close behind him, until the Marchioness, having in some degree recovered her breath, and the loss of her shoe, and the novelty of her position, uttered close into his ear, the words—

"I say, sir"—

He turned his head quickly enough then, and stopping the pony, cried, with some trepidation, "God bless me, what is this!"

"Don't be frightened, sir," replied the still panting messenger. "Oh, I've run such a way after you!"

"What do you want with me?" said Mr. Abel. "How did you come here?"

"I got in behind," replied the Marchioness. "Oh please drive on, sir — don't stop — and go towards the city, will you? And oh do please make haste, because it's of consequence. There's somebody wants to see you there. He sent me to say, would you come directly, and that he knowed all about Kit, and could save him yet, and prove his innocence"

"What do you tell me, child?"

"The truth, upon my word and honour I do. But please do drive on — quick, please. I've been such a time gone, he'll think I'm lost."

Mr. Abel involuntarily urged the pony forward. The pony, impelled by some secret sympathy or some new caprice, burst into a great pace, and neither slackened it, nor indulged in any eccentric performances, until they arrived at the door of Mr. Swiveller's lodgings, where, marvellous to relate, he consented to stop when Mr. Abel checked him.

"See! It's that room up there," said the Marchioness pointing to one where there was a faint light. "Come!"

Mr. Abel, who was one of the simplest and most retiring creatures in existence, and naturally timid withal, hesitated; for he had heard of people being decoyed into strange places to be robbed and murdered, under circumstances very like the present, and for anything he knew to the contrary, by guides very like the Marchioness. His regard for Kit, however, overcame every other consideration. So entrusting Whisker to the charge of a man who was lingering hard by in expectation of the job, he suffered his companion to take his hand, and lead him up the dark and narrow stairs.

He was not a little surprised to find himself conducted into a dimly-lighted sick chamber, where a man was sleeping tranquilly in bed.

"An't it nice to see him lying there so quiet?" said his guide, in an earnest whisper. "Oh! you'd say it was, if you had only seen him two or three days ago."

Mr. Abel made no answer, and to say the truth, kept a long way from the bed and very near the door. His guide, who appeared to understand his reluctance, trimmed the candle, and taking it in her hand, approached the bed. As she did so, the sleeper started up, and he recognized in the wasted face the features of Richard Swiveller.

"Why, how is this?" said Mr. Abel kindly, as he hurried towards him. "You have been ill?"

"Very," replied Dick. "Nearly dead. You might have chanced to hear of your Richard on his bier, but for the friend I sent to fetch you. Another shake of the hand, Marchioness, if you please. Sit down, sir."

Mr. Abel seemed rather astonished to hear of the quality of his guide, and took a chair by the bedside.

"I have sent for you, sir," said Dick, "but she told you on what account?"

"She did. I am quite bewildered by all this. I really don't know what to say, or think," replied Mr. Abel.

"You'll say that presently," retorted Dick. "Marchioness, take a seat on the bed, will you? Now, tell this gentleman all that you told me; and be particular. Don't you speak another word, sir."

The story was repeated; it was, in effect, exactly the same as before, without any deviation or omission. Richard Swiveller kept his eyes fixed on his visiter, during its narration, and directly it was concluded, took the word again.

"You have heard it all, and you'll not forget it. I'm too giddy, and too queer, to suggest anything; but you and your friends will know what to do. After this long delay, every minute is an age. If ever you went home fast in your life, go home fast to-night. Don't stop to say one word to me, but go. She will be found here, whenever she's wanted; and as to me, you're pretty sure to find me at home, for a week or two. There are more reasons than one for that. Marchioness, a light. If you lose another minute in looking at me, sir, I'll never forgive you!"

Mr. Abel needed no further remonstrance or persuasion. He was gone in an instant; and the Marchioness, returning from lighting him down stairs, reported that the pony, without any preliminary objection whatever, had dashed away at full gallop.

"That's right!" said Dick; "and hearty of him; and I honour him for this time. But get some supper and a mug of beer, for I am sure you must be tired. Do have a mug of beer. It will do me as much good to see you take it as if I might drink it myself."

Nothing but this assurance could have prevailed upon the small nurse to indulge in such a luxury. Having eaten and drunk to Mr. Swiveller's extreme contentment, given him his drink, and put everything in neat order, she wrapped herself in an old coverlet and lay down upon the rug before the fire.

Mr. Swiveller was by that time murmuring in his sleep. "Strew then, oh strew, a bed of rushes. Here will we stay till morning blushes. Good night, Marchioness."

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-SIXTH.

On awaking in the morning, Richard Swiveller became conscious by slow degrees of whispering voices in his room. Looking out between the curtains, he espied Mr. Garland, Mr. Abel, the notary, and the single gentleman, gathered round the Marchioness, and talking to her with great earnestness, but in very subdued tones — fearing, no doubt, to disturb him. He lost no time in letting them know that this precaution was unnecessary, and all four gentlemen directly approached his bedside. Old Mr. Garland was the first to stretch out his hand, and inquire how he felt.

Dick was about to answer that he felt much better, though still as weak as need be, when his little nurse, pushing the visiters aside, and pressing up to his pillow, as if in jealousy of their interference, set his breakfast before him, and insisted on his taking it, before he underwent the fatigue of speaking, or of being spoken to. Mr. Swiveller, who was perfectly ravenous, and had had, all night, amazingly distinct and consistent dreams of mutton chops, double stout, and similar delicacies, felt even the weak tea, and dry toast, such irresistible temptations, that he consented to eat and drink, upon one condition.

"And that is," said Dick, returning the pressure of Mr. Garland's hand, "that you answer me this question, truly, before I take a bit or drop. Is it too late?"

"For completing the work you began so well last night?" returned the old gentleman. "No. Set your mind at rest upon that point. It is not, I assure you."

Comforted by this intelligence, the patient applied himself to his food with a keen appetite, though evidently not with a greater zest in the eating, than his nurse appeared to have in seeing him eat. The manner of his meal was this: — Mr. Swiveller, holding the slice of toast or cup of tea, in his left hand, and taking a bite or drink, as the case might be, constantly kept, in his right, one palm of the Marchioness tight locked; and to shake, or even to kiss, this imprisoned hand, he would stop every now and then, in the very act of swallowing, with perfect seriousness of intention, and the utmost gravty. As often as he put anything into his mouth, whether for eating or drinking, the face of the Marchioness lighted up beyond all description; but whenever he gave her one or other of these tokens of recognition, her countenance became overshadowed, and she began to sob. Now, whether she was in her laughing joy, or in her crying one, the Marchioness could not help turning to the visiters with an appealing look, which seemed to say, "You see this fellow — can I help this?" — and they being thus made, as it were, parties to the scene, as regularly answered by another look, "No. Certainly not." This dumb-show taking place during the whole time of the invalid's breakfast, and the invalid himself, pale and emaciated, performing no small part in the same, it may be fairly questioned, whether at any meal, where no word, good or bad, was spoken from beginning to end, so much was expressed by gestures in themselves so slight and unimportant.

At length — and to say the truth before very long — Mr. Swiveller had despatched as much toast and tea, as in that stage of his recovery it was discreet to let him have. But the cares of the Marchioness did not stop here; for, disappearing for an instant, and presently returning with a basin of fair water, she laved his face and hands, brushed his hair, and in short made him as spruce and smart as anybody under such circumstances could be made; and all this in as brisk and business-like a manner, as if he were a very little boy, and she his grown-up nurse. To these various attentions, Mr. Swiveller submitted in a kind of grateful astonishment, beyond the reach of language. When they were at last brought to an end, and the Marchioness had withdrawn into a distant corner, to take her own poor breakfast (cold enough by that time), he turned his face away for some few moments, and shook hands heartily with the air.

"Gentlemen," said Dick, rousing himself from this pause, and turning round again, "you'll excuse me. Men who have been brought so low, as I have been, are easily fatigued. I am fresh again, now, and fit for talking. We're short of chairs, here, among other trifles, but if you'll do me the favour to sit upon the bed——"

"What can we do for you?" said Mr. Garland kindly.

"If you could make the Marchioness yonder, a Marchioness, in real, sober earnest," returned Dick, "I 'd thank you to get it done off-hand. But as you can't, and as the question is not what you will do for me, but what you will do for somebody else, who has a better claim upon you, pray sir, let me know what you intend doing."

"It 's chiefly on that account that we have come just now," said the single gentleman, "for you will have another visiter presently. We feared you would be anxious, unless you knew from ourselves, what steps we intended to take, and therefore came to you before we stirred in the matter."

"Gentlemen," returned Dick, "I thank you. Anybody in the helpless state that you see me in, is naturally anxious. Don't let me interrupt you, sir."

"Then, you see, my good fellow," said the single gentleman, "that while we have no doubt, whatever of the truth of this disclosure, which has so providentially come to light—"

"Meaning hers?" said Dick, pointing towards the Marchioness.

"—Meaning hers, of course. While we have no doubt of that, or that a proper use of it would procure the poor lad's immediate pardon and liberation, we have a great doubt whether it would, by itself, enable us to reach Quilp, the chief agent in this villany. I should tell you that this doubt has been confirmed into something, very nearly approaching certainty by the best opinions we have been enabled, in this short space of time, to take upon the subject. You 'll agree with us, that to give him even the most distant chance of escape, if we could help it, would be monstrous. You say with us, no doubt, if somebody must escape, let it be any one but he."

"Yes," returned Dick, "certainly. That is if somebody *must*—but upon my word, I 'm unwilling that anybody should. Since laws were made for every degree, to curb vice in others as well as in me—and so forth you know—does'nt it strike you in that light?"

The single gentleman smiled as if the light in which Mr. Swiveller had put the question was not the clearest in the world, and proceeded to explain that they contemplated proceeding by stratagem in the first instance; and that their design was to endeavor to extort a confession from the gentle Sarah.

"When she finds how much we know, and how we know it," he said, "and that she is clearly compromised already, we are not without strong hopes that we may be enabled through her means to punish the other two effectually. If we could do that, she might go scot-free for aught I cared."

Dick received this project in anything but a gracious manner, representing with as much warmth as he was then capable of showing, that they would find the old buck (meaning Sarah) more difficult to manage than Quilp himself—that for any tampering, terrifying, or cajolery, she was a very unpromising and unyielding subject—that she was a kind of brass not easily melted or moulded into shape—in short, that they were no match for her, and would be signally defeated. But it was in vain to urge them to adopt some other course. The single gentleman has been described as explaining their joint intentions, but it should have been written that they all spoke together; that if any of them by chance held his peace for a moment, he stood gasping and panting for an opportunity to strike in again: in a word, that they had reached that pitch of impatience and anxiety where men can neither be persuaded nor reasoned with; that it would have been easier to turn the most impetuous wind that ever blew, than to prevail on them to reconsider their determination. So, after telling Mr. Swiveller how they had not lost sight of Kit's mother and the children; how they had never once even lost sight of Kit himself, but had been unremitting in their endeavours to procure a mitigation of his sentence; how they had been perfectly distracted between the strong proofs of his guilt and their own fading hopes of his innocence; and how he, Richard Swiveller, might keep his mind at rest, for everything should be happily adjusted between that time and night; after telling him all this, and adding a great many kind and cordial expressions, personal to himself, which it is unnecessary to recite, Mr. Garland, the Notary, and the single gentleman, took their leaves at a very critical time, or Richard Swiveller must assuredly have been driven into another fever, whereof the results might have been fatal.

Mr. Abel remained behind, very often looking at his watch and at the room door, until Mr. Swiveller was roused from a short nap, by the setting-down on the landing-place outside, as from the shoulders of a porter, of some giant load, which seemed to shake the house and made the little physic bottles on the mantel-shelf ring again. Directly this sound reached his ears, Mr. Abel started up, and hobbled to the door, and opened it; and behold! there stood a strong man with a mighty hamper, which being hauled into the room and presently unpacked, disgorged such treasures of tea, and coffee, and wine, and rusks, and oranges, and

grapes, and fowls ready trussed for boiling, and calves'-foot jelly, and arrow-root, and sago, and other delicate restoratives, that the small servant, who had never thought it possible that such things could be, except in shops, stood rooted to the spot in her one shoe, with her mouth and eyes watering in unison, and her power of speech quite gone. But not so Mr. Abel; or the strong man who emptied the hamper, big as it was, in a twinkling; and not so the nice old lady, who appeared so suddenly that she might have come out of the hamper too (it was quite large enough), and who, bustling about on tiptoe and without noise — now here, now there, now everywhere at once—began to fill out the jelly in teacups, and to make chicken broth in small saucepans, and to peel oranges for the sick man and to cut them up in little pieces, and to ply the small servant with glasses of wine and choice bits of everything until more substantial meat could be prepared for her refreshment. The whole of which appearances were so unexpected and bewildering, that Mr. Swiveller, when he had taken two oranges and a little jelly, and had seen the strong man walk off with the empty basket, plainly leaving all that abundance for his use and benefit, was fain to lie down and fall asleep again, from sheer inability to entertain such wonders in his mind.

Meanwhile the single gentleman, the Notary, and Mr. Garland, repaired to a certain coffee-house, and from that place indited and sent a letter to Miss Sally Brass, requesting her, in terms mysterious and brief, to favour an unknown friend who wished to consult her, with her company there, as speedily as possible. The communication performed its errand so well that within ten minutes of the messenger's return and report of its delivery, Miss Brass herself was announced.

"Pray ma'am," said the single gentleman, whom she found alone in the room, "take a chair."

Miss Brass sat herself down in a very stiff and frigid state, and seemed—as indeed she was—not a little astonished to find that the lodger and her mysterious correspondent, were one and the same person.

"You did not expect to see me!" said the single gentleman.

"I didn't think much about it," returned the beauty. "I supposed it was business of some kind or other. If it's about the apartments, of course you'll give my brother regular notice, you know—or money. That's very easily settled. You're a re

sponsible party, and in such a case lawful money and lawful notice are pretty much the same."

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion," retorted the single gentleman, "and quite concur in those sentiments. But that is not the subject on which I wish to speak with you."

"Oh!" said Sally. "Then just state the particulars, will you? I suppose it's professional business?"

"Why, it *is* connected with the law, certainly."

"Very well," returned Miss Brass. "My brother and I are just the same. I can take any instructions, or give you any advice."

"As there are other parties interested besides myself," said the single gentleman, rising and opening the door of an inner room, "we had better confer together. Miss Brass is here, gentlemen!"

Mr. Garland and the Notary walked in, looking very grave; and drawing up two chairs, one on each side of the single gentleman, formed a kind of fence round the gentle Sarah, and penned her into a corner. Her brother Sampson under such circumstances would certainly have evinced some confusion or anxiety, but she — all composure — pulled out the tin box and calmly took a pinch of snuff.

"Miss Brass," said the Notary, taking the word at this crisis, "we professional people understand each other, and, when we choose, can say what we have to say, in very few words. You advertised a runaway servant, the other day?"

"Well," returned Miss Sally, with a sudden flush overspreading her features. "What of that?"

"She is found, ma'am," said the Notary, pulling out his pocket-handkerchief with a flourish. "She is found."

"Who found her?" demanded Sarah hastily.

"We did, ma'am—we three. Only last night, or you would have heard from us before."

"And now I *have* heard from you," said Miss Brass, folding her arms resolutely, as though she were about to deny something to the death, "what have you got to say? Something you have got into your heads about her, of course. Prove it, will you—that's all. Prove it. You have found her, you say. I can tell you (if you don't know it) that you have found the most artful, lying, pilfering, and devilish little minx that was ever born.—Have you got her here?" she added, looking sharply round.

"No, she is not here at present," returned the Notary. "But she is quite safe."

"Ha!" cried Sally, twitching a pinch of snuff out of her box, as spitefully as if she were in the very act of wrenching off the small servant's nose; "she shall be safe enough from this time, I warrant you."

"I hope so," replied the Notary.—"Did it occur to you for the first time when you found she had run away, that there were two keys to your kitchen door?"

Miss Sally took another pinch, and putting her head on one side, looked at her questioner with a curious kind of spasm about her mouth, but with a cunning aspect of immense expression.

"Two keys," repeated the Notary; "one of which gave her the opportunities of roaming through the house at nights when you supposed her fast locked up, and of overhearing confidential consultations — among others, that particular conference to be described to-day before a justice, which you will have an opportunity of hearing her relate; that conference which you and Mr. Brass held together on the night before that most unfortunate and innocent young man was accused of robbery, by a horrible device of which I will only say that it may be characterized by the epithets you have applied to this wretched little witness, and by a few stronger ones besides."

Sally took another pinch. Although her face was wonderfully composed, it was apparent that she was wholly taken by surprise, and that what she had expected to be taxed with, in connexion with her small servant, was something very different from this.

"Come, come, Miss Brass," said the Notary, "you have great command of feature, but you feel, I see, that by a chance which never entered your imagination, this base design is revealed, and two of its plotters must be brought to justice. Now, you know the pains and penalties you are liable to, and so I need not dilate upon them, but I have a proposal to make to you. You have the honour of being sister to one of the greatest scoundrels unhung, and, if I may venture to say so to a lady, you are in every respect quite worthy of him. But connected with you two is a third party, a villain of the name of Quilp, the prime mover of the whole diabolical device, who I believe to be worse than either. For his sake, Miss Brass, do us the favour to reveal the whole history of this affair. Let me remind you that your doing so at our instance, will place you in a safe and comfortable position—your present one is not desirable — and cannot injure your brother, for against him and you we have quite sufficient evidence (as you hear) already. I will not say to you that

we suggest this course in mercy (for, to tell you the truth, we do not entertain any regard for you), but it is a necessity to which we are reduced, and I recommend it to you as a matter of the very best policy. Time," said Mr. Witherden, pulling out his watch, "in a business like this, is exceedingly precious. Favour us with your decision, as speedily as possible, ma'am."

With a smile upon her face, and looking at each of the three by turns, Miss Brass took two or three more pinches of snuff, and having by this time very little left, travelled round and round the box with her fore-finger and thumb, scraping up another. Having disposed of this likewise, and put the box carefully in her pocket, she said,—

"I am to accept or reject at once, am I?"

"Yes," said Mr. Witherden.

The charming creature was opening her lips to speak in reply, when the door was hastily opened too, and the head of Sampson Brass was thrust into the room.

"Excuse me," said that gentleman hastily. "Wait a bit."

So saying, and quite indifferent to the astonishment his presence occasioned, he crept in, shut the door, kissed his greasy glove, as servilely as if it were the dust, and made a most abject bow.

"Sarah," said Brass, "hold your tongue if you please, and let me speak. Gentlemen, if I could express the pleasure it gives me to see three such men, in a happy unity of feeling and concord of sentiment, I think you would hardly believe me. But though I am unfortunate—nay, gentlemen, criminal, if we are to use harsh expressions in a company like this—still I have my feelings like other men. I have heard of a poet, who remarked that feelings were the common lot of all. If he could have been a pig, gentlemen, and have uttered that sentiment, he would still have been immortal."

"If you 're not an idiot," said Miss Brass harshly, "hold your peace."

"Sarah, my dear," returned her brother, "thank you. But I know what I am about, my love, and will take the liberty of expressing myself accordingly. Mr. Witherden, sir, your handkerchief is hanging out of your pocket—would you allow me to—"

As Mr. Brass advanced to remedy this accident, the Notary shrunk from him with an air of great disgust. Brass, who over and above his usual prepossessing qualities, had a scratched face, a green shade over one eye, and a hat grievously crushed, stopped short, and looked round with a pitiful smile.

"He shuns me," said Sampson, "even when I would, as I may say, heap coals of fire upon his head. Well! Ah! But I am a falling house, and the rats (if I may be

allowed the expression in reference to a gentleman, that I respect and love beyond every thing) from me — Gentlemen — regarding your conversation just now, I happened to see my sister on her way here, and wondering where she could be going to, and being — may I venture to say? — naturally of a suspicious turn, followed her—Since then, I have been listening—"

"If you're not mad," interposed Miss Sally, "stop there, and say no more."

"Sarah, my dear," rejoined Brass, with undiminished politeness, "I thank you kindly, but will still proceed.

"Mr. Witherden, sir, as we have the honour to be members of the same profession — to say nothing of that other gentleman having been my lodger, and having partaken, as one may say, of the hospitality of my roof—I think you might have given me the refusal of this offer, in the first instance—I do indeed—"

"Now, my dear sir," cried Brass, seeing that the Notary was about to interrupt him, "suffer me to speak, I beg—"

Mr. Witherden was silent, and Brass went on—"If you will do me the favour," he said, holding up the green shade, and revealing an eye most horribly discoloured, "to look at this, you will naturally inquire in your own minds, how did I get it — If you look from that, to my face, you will wonder what could have been the cause of all these scratches — And if from them, to my hat, how it came into the state in which you see it — Gentlemen," said Brass, striking the hat fiercely with his clenched hand, "to all these questions I answer—Quilp."

The three gentlemen looked at each other, but said nothing.

"I say," pursued Brass, glancing aside at his sister, as though he were talking for her information, and speaking with a snarling malignity, in violent contrast to his usual smoothness, "that I answer to all these questions, — Quilp — Quilp, who deludes me into his infernal den, and takes a delight in looking on and chuckling while I scorch, and burn, and bruise, and maim myself — Quilp, who never once, no never once, in all our communications together, has treated me otherwise, than as a dog—Quilp, whom I have always hated with my whole heart, but never so much as lately. He gives me the cold shoulder on this very matter, as if he had had nothing to do with it, instead of being the first to propose it. I can't trust him. In one of his howling, raving, blazing humours, I believe he'd let it out if it was murder, and never think of himself so long as he could terrify me. Now," said Brass, picking up his hat again, replacing the shade over his eye, and actually crouching down, in the excess of his servility, "what does all this lead me to? — what should you say it led me to, gentlemen? — could you guess at all near the mark?"

Nobody spoke. Brass stood smirking for a little while, as if he had propounded some choice conundrum; and then said:

"To be short with you, then, it leads me to this. If the truth has come out, as it plainly has in a manner that there's no standing up against — and a very sublime and grand thing is Truth, gentlemen, in its way, though like other sublime and grand things, such as thunder-storms and that, we're not always over and above glad to see it — I had better turn upon this man, than let this man turn upon me. It's clear to me that I am done for. Therefore, if anybody is to split, I had better be the person, and have the advantage of it. Sarah, my dear, comparatively speaking, you're safe. I relate these circumstances for my own profit."

With that, Mr. Brass, in a great hurry, revealed the whole story; bearing as heavily as possible on his amiable employer, and making himself out to be rather a saint-like and holy character, though subject — he acknowledged — to human weaknesses. He concluded thus:

"Now, gentlemen, I am not a man who does things by halves. Being in for a penny, I am ready, as the saying is, to be in for a pound. You must do with me what you please, and take me where you please. If you wish to have this in writing, we'll reduce it into manuscript immediately. You will be tender with me, I am sure. I am quite confident you will be tender with me. You are men of honour, and have feeling hearts. I yielded from necessity to Quilp, for though necessity has no law, she has her lawyers. I yield to you from necessity too; from policy besides; and because of feelings that have been a pretty long time working within me. Punish Quilp, gentlemen. Weigh heavily upon him. Grind him down. Tread him under foot. He has done as much by me, for many and many a day."

Having now arrived at the conclusion of his discourse, Sampson checked the current of his wrath, kissed his glove again, and smiled as only parasites and cowards can.

"And this," said Miss Brass, raising her head, with which she had hitherto sat resting on her hands, and surveying him from head to foot, with a bitter sneer, "this is my brother, is it! This is my brother.

that I have worked and toiled for, and believed to have had something of the man in him!"

"Sarah, my dear," returned Sampson, rubbing his hands feebly; "you disturb our friends. Besides you — you 're disappointed, Sarah, and not knowing what you say, expose yourself."

"Yes, you pitiful dastard," retorted the lovely damsel, "I understand you. You feared that I should be beforehand with you. But do you think that *I* would have been enticed to say a word! I 'd have scorned it, if they had tried and tempted me for twenty years."

"He, he!" simpered Brass, who in his deep debasement really seemed to have changed sexes with his sister, and to have made over to her any spark of manliness he might have possessed. "You think so, Sarah, you think so, perhaps; but you would have acted quite different, my good fellow. You will not have forgotten that it was a maxim with Foxey — our revered father, gentlemen—'Always suspect everybody.' That 's the maxim to go through life with! If you were not actually about to purchase your own safety, when I showed myself, I suspect you 'd have done it by this time. And therefore, I 've done it myself, and spared you the trouble, as well as the shame. The shame, gentlemen," added Brass, allowing himself to be slightly overcome, "if there is any, is mine. It 's better that a female should be spared it."

With deference to the better opinion of Mr. Brass, and more particularly to the authority of his Great Ancestor, it may be doubted with humility, whether the elevating principle laid down by the latter gentleman, and acted upon by his descendant, is always a prudent one, or attended in practice with the desired results. This is, beyond question, a bold and presumptuous doubt, inasmuch as many distinguished characters, called men of the world, long-headed customers, knowing dogs, shrewd fellows, capital hands at business, and the like, have made, and do daily make, this axiom their polar star and compass. Still the doubt may be gently insinuated. And in illustration, it may be observed, that if Mr. Brass, not being over-suspicious, had, without prying and listening, left his sister to manage the conference on their joint behalf, or, prying and listening, had not been in such a mighty hurry to anticipate her (which he would not have been, but for his distrust and jealousy), he would probably have found himself much better off in the end. Thus it will always happen that these men of the world, who go through it in armour, defend themselves from quite as much good as evil; to say nothing of the inconvenience and absurdity of mounting guard with a microscope at all times, and of wearing a coat of mail on the most innocent occasions.

The three gentlemen spoke together apart, for a few moments. At the end of their consultation, which was very brief, the Notary pointed to the writing materials on the table, and informed Mr. Brass, that if he wished to make any statement in writing, he had the opportunity of doing so. At the same time, he felt bound to tell him that they would require his attendance presently, before a justice of the peace, and that in what he did or said, he was guided entirely by his own discretion.

"Gentlemen," said Brass, drawing off his gloves, and crawling in spirit upon the ground before them, "I will justify the tenderness with which I know I shall be treated; and as, without tenderness, I should, now that this discovery has been made, stand in the worst position of the three, you may depend upon it I will make a clean breast. Mr. Witherden sir, a kind of faintness is upon my spirits — if you would do me the favour to ring the bell and order up a glass of something warm and spicy, I shall, notwithstanding what has passed, have a melancholy pleasure in drinking your good health. I had hoped," said Brass, looking round with a mournful smile, "to have seen you three gentlemen one day or another with your legs under the mahogany in my humble parlour in the Marks. But hopes are fleeting. Dear me!"

Mr. Brass found himself so exceedingly affected at this point, that he could say or do nothing more until some refreshment arrived. Having partaken of it, pretty freely for one in his agitated state, he sat down to write.

The lovely Sarah, now with her arms folded, and now with her hands clasped behind her, paced the room with manly strides while her brother was thus employed, and sometimes stopped to pull out her snuff-box and bite the lid. She continued to pace up and down until she was quite tired, and then fell asleep on a chair near the door.

It has been since supposed with some reason that this slumber was a sham or feint, as she contrived to slip away unobserved in the dusk of the afternoon. Whether this was an intentional and waking departure, or a somnambulastic leave-taking and walking in her sleep, may remain a subject of contention; but on one point (and indeed the main one) all parties are agreed.

In whatever state she walked away, she certainly did not walk back again.

Mention having been made of the dusk of the afternoon, it will be inferred that Mr. Brass's task occupied some time in the completion. It was not finished until evening; but being done at last, that worthy person and the three friends adjourned in a hackney-coach to the private office of a Justice, who, giving Mr. Brass a warm reception and detaining him in a secure place that he might ensure to himself the pleasure of seeing him on the morrow, dismissed the others with the cheering assurance that a warrant could not fail to be granted next day for the apprehension of Mr. Quilp, and that a proper application and statement of all the circumstances to the secretary of state (who was fortunately in town), would no doubt procure Kit's free pardon and liberation without delay.

And now indeed it seemed that Quilp's malignant career was drawing to a close, and that retribution which often travels slowly — especially when heaviest — had tracked his footsteps with a sure and certain scent and was gaining on him fast. Unmindful of her stealthy tread, her victim holds his course in fancied triumph. Still at his heels she comes, and once afoot, is never turned aside.

Their business ended, the three gentlemen hastened back to the lodgings of Mr. Swiveller, whom they found progressing so favourably in his recovery as to have been able to sit up for half an hour, and to have conversed with cheerfulness. Mrs. Garland had gone home some time since, but Mr. Abel was still sitting with him. After telling him all they had done, the two Mr. Garlands and the single gentleman, as if by some previous understanding, took their leaves for the night, leaving the invalid alone with the Notary and the small servant.

"As you are so much better," said Mr. Witherden, sitting down at the bedside, "I may venture to communicate to you a piece of news which has come to me professionally."

The idea of any professional intelligence from a gentleman connected with legal matters, appeared to afford Richard anything but a pleasing anticipation. Perhaps he connected it in his own mind with one or two outstanding accounts, in reference to which he had already received divers threatening letters. His countenance fell as he replied—

"Certainly, sir. I hope it 's not anything of a very disagreeable nature, though?"

"If I thought it so, I should choose some better time for communicating it," replied the Notary. "Let me tell you, first, that my friends who have been here to-day, know nothing of it, and that their kindness to you has been quite spontaneous and with no hope of return. It may do a thoughtless, careless man, good to know that."

Dick thanked him, and said he hoped it would.

"I have been making some inquiries about you," said Mr. Witherden, "little thinking that I should find you under such circumstances as those which have brought us together. You are the nephew of Rebecca Swiveller, spinster, deceased, of Chesel, born in Dorsetshire."

"Deceased!" cried Dick.

"Deceased. If you had been another sort of nephew, you would have come into possession (so says the will, and I see no reason to doubt it) of five-and-twenty thousand pounds. As it is, you have fallen into an annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds a year; but I think I may congratulate you even upon that."

"Sir," said Dick, sobbing and laughing together, "you may. For please God, we 'll make a scholar of the poor Marchioness yet! And she shall walk in silk attire, and siller have to spare, or may I never rise from this bed again?"

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-SEVENTH.

Unconscious of the proceedings faithfully narrated in the last chapter, and little dreaming of the mine which had sprung beneath him (for to the end that he should have no warning of the business afloat, the profoundest secrecy was observed in the whole transaction,) Mr. Quilp remained shut up in his hermitage; undisturbed by any suspicion, and extremely well satisfied with the result of his machinations. Being engaged in the adjustment of some accounts—an occupation to which the silence and solitude of his retreat were very favourable—he had not strayed from his den for two whole days. The third day of his devotion to this pursuit found him still hard at work, and little disposed to start abroad.

It was the next day after Mr. Brass's confession, and consequently that which threatened the restriction of Mr. Quilp's liberty, and the abrupt communication to him of some very unpleasant and unwelcome facts. Having no intuitive perception of the cloud which lowered upon his house, the dwarf was in his ordinary state of cheerfulness; and, when he found he was becoming too much engrossed by business, with a due regard to his health and spirits, he varied its monotonous routine with a little screeching, or howling, or some other innocent relaxation of that nature.

He was attended, as usual, by Tom Scott, who sat crouching over the fire after the manner of a toad, and from time to time, when his master's back was turned, imitated his grimaces with a fearful exactness. The figure-head had not yet disappeared, but remained in its old place. The face, horribly seared by the frequent application of the red hot poker, and further ornamented by the insertion in the tip of the nose of a tenpenny nail, yet smiled blandly in its less lacerated parts, but seemed, like a sturdy martyr, to provoke its tormentor to the commission of new outrages and insults.

The day, in the highest and brightest quarters of the town, was damp, dark, cold, and gloomy. In that low and marshy spot, the fog filled every nook and corner with a thick, dense cloud. Every object was obscured at one or two yards' distance. The waning lights and fires upon the river were powerless beneath this pall, and but for a raw and piercing chillness in the air, and now and then the cry of some bewildered boatman as he rested on his oars and tried to make out where he was, the river itself might have been miles away.

The mist, though sluggish and slow to move, was of a keenly searching kind. No muffling up in furs and broadcloth kept it out. It seemed to penetrate into the very bones of the shrinking wayfarers, and to rack them with cold and pains. Every thing was wet and clammy to the touch. The warm blaze alone defied it, and leaped and sparkled merrily. It was a day to be at home, crowding about the fire, telling stories of revellers who had lost their way in such weather on heaths and moors; and to love a warm hearth more than ever.

The dwarf's humour, as we know, was to have a fireside to himself; and when he was disposed to be convivial, to enjoy himself alone. By no means insensible to the comfort of being within doors, he ordered Tom Scott to pile the little stove with coals, and dismissing his work for that day, determined to be jovial.

To this end, he lighted up fresh candles and heaped more fuel on the fire; and having dined off a beef-steak, which he cooked himself in somewhat of a savage and cannibal-like manner, brewed a great bowl of hot punch, lighted his pipe, and sat down to spend the evening.

At this moment a low knocking at the cabin-door arrested his attention. When it had been twice or thrice repeated, he softly opened the little window, and thrusting his head out, demanded who was there.

"Only me, Quilp," replied a woman's voice.

"Only you!" cried the dwarf, stretching his neck to obtain a better view of his visiter. "And what brings you here, you jade? How dare you approach the ogre's castle, eh?"

"I have come with some news," rejoined his spouse. "Don't be angry with me."

"Is it good news, pleasant news; news to make a man skip and snap his fingers?" said the dwarf. "Is the dear old lady dead?"

"I don't know what news it is, or whether it's good or bad," rejoined his wife.

"Then she's alive," said Quilp, "and there's nothing the matter with her. Go

home again, you bird of evil note, go home."

"I have brought a letter," cried the meek little woman.

"Toss it in at the window here, and go your ways," said Quilp, interrupting her, "or I'll go and scratch you."

"No, but please, Quilp—do hear me speak," urged his submissive wife, in tears. "Please do."

"Speak, then," growled the dwarf, with a malicious grin. "Be quick and short about it. Speak, will you?"

"It was left at our house this afternoon," said Mrs. Quilp, trembling, "by a boy who said he didn't know from whom it came, but that it was given him to leave, and that he was told to say it must be brought on to you directly, for it was of the very greatest consequence. But please," she added, as her husband stretched out his hand for it, "please let me in. You don't know how wet and cold I am, or how many times I have lost my way in coming here through this thick fog. Let me dry myself at the fire for five minutes. I'll go away directly you tell me to, Quilp. Upon my word I will."

Her amiable husband hesitated for a few moments; but bethinking himself that the letter might require some answer, of which she could be the bearer, closed the window, opened the door, and bade her enter. Mrs. Quilp obeyed right willingly, and kneeling down before the fire to warm her hands, delivered into his a little packet.

"I'm glad you're wet," said Quilp, snatching it, and squinting at her. "I'm glad you're cold. I'm glad you've lost your way. I'm glad your eyes are red with crying. It does my heart good to see your little nose so pinched and frosty."

"Oh Quilp!" sobbed his wife. "How cruel it is of you!"

"Did she think I was dead?" said Quilp, wrinkling his face into a most extraordinary series of grimaces. "Did she think she was going to have all the money, and to marry somebody she liked! Ha, ha, ha! Did she?"

These taunts elicited no reply from the poor woman, who remained on her knees, warming her hands and sobbing, to Mr. Quilp's great delight. But as he was contemplating her, and chuckling excessively, he happened to observe that Tom Scott was delighted too; whereon, that he might have no presumptuous partner in his glee, the dwarf instantly collared him, dragged him to the door, and after a short scuffle, kicked him into the yard. In return for this mark of attention, Tom immediately walked upon his hands to the window, and—if the expression be allowable—looked in with his shoes; besides rattling his feet upon the glass like a Banshee upside down. As a matter of course, Mr. Quilp lost no time in resorting to the infallible poker, with which, after some dodging and lying in ambush, he paid his young friend one or two such unequivocal compliments, that he vanished precipitately, and left him in quiet possession of the field.

"So! That little job being disposed of," said the dwarf coolly, "I'll read my letter. Humph!" he muttered, looking at the direction. "I ought to know this writing. Beautiful Sally!"

Opening it, he read in a fair, round, legal hand, as follows:

"Sammy has been practised upon, and has broken confidence. It has all come out. You had better not be in the way for strangers are going to call upon you. They have been very quiet as yet, because they mean to surprise you. Don't lose time. I didn't. I am not to be found anywhere. If I was you, I wouldn't be either. S. B. late of B. M."

To describe the changes that passed over Quilp's face, as he read this letter over half a dozen times, would require some new language; such, for power of expression, as was never written or spoken. For a long time he did not utter one word; but after a considerable interval, during which Mrs. Quilp was almost paralysed with the alarm his looks engendered, he contrived to gasp out,

"—If I had him here. If I only had him here—"

"Oh, Quilp!" said his wife, "what's the matter? Who are you angry with?"

"I should drown him," said the dwarf, not heeding her. "Too easy a death, too short, too quick—but the river runs close at hand. Oh! If I had him here! Just to take him to the brink, coaxingly and pleasantly,—holding him by the button-hole—joking with him,—and with a sudden push, to send him splashing down! Drowning men come to the surface three times, they say. Ah! To see him those three times, and to mock him as his face came bobbing up,—oh! what a rich treat that would be!"

"Quilp!" stammered his wife, venturing at the same time to touch him on the shoulder, "what has gone wrong?"

She was so terrified by the relish with which he pictured this pleasure to himself, that she could scarcely make herself intelligible.

"Such a bloodless cur!" said Quilp, rubbing his hands very slowly, and pressing them tight together. "I thought his cowardice and servility were the best guarantee for his keeping silence. Oh

Brass, Brass—my dear, good, affectionate, faithful, complimentary, charming friend —if I only had you here!"

His wife, who had retreated, lest she should seem to listen to these mutterings, ventured to approach him again, and was about to speak, when he hurried to the door and called Tom Scott, who, remembering his late gentle admonition, deemed prudent to appear immediately.

"There!" said the dwarf, pulling him in. "Take her home. Don't come here to-morrow, for this place will be shut up. Come back no more till you hear from me or see me. Do you mind?"

Tom nodded sulkily, and beckoned Mrs. Quilp to lead the way.

"As for you," said the dwarf, addressing himself to her, "ask no questions about me, make no search for me, say nothing concerning me. I shall not be dead, mistress, and that 'll comfort you. He 'll take care of you."

"But, Quilp, what is the matter? Where are you going? Do say something more?"

"I 'll say that," said the dwarf, seizing her by the arm, "and do that too, which, undone and unsaid would be best for you, unless you go directly."

"Has any thing happened?" cried his wife. "Oh! Do tell me that."

"Yes," snarled the dwarf. "No. What matter which? I have told you what to do, Woe betide you if you fail to do it, or disobey me a hair breadth. Will you go?"

"I am going, I 'll go directly; but," faltered his wife, "answer me one question first. Has this letter any connection with dear little Nell? I must ask you that—I must, indeed, Quilp. You cannot think what days and nights of sorrow I have had through having once deceived that child. I don't know what harm I may have brought about, but, great or little, I did it for you, Quilp. My conscience misgave me when I did it. Do answer me this question, if you please."

The exasperated dwarf returned no answer, but turned round and caught up his usual weapon with such vehemence, that Tom Scott dragged his charge away by main force, and as swiftly as he could. It was well he did so, for Quilp, who was nearly mad with rage, pursued them to the neighbouring lane, and might have prolonged the chase, but for the dense mist which obscured them from his view, and appeared to thicken every moment.

"It will be a good night for travelling anonymously," he said, as he returned slowly, being pretty well breathed with his run. "Stay. We may look better here. This is too hosp table and free."

By a great exertion of strength, he closed the two old gates, which were deeply sunken in the mud, and barred them with a heavy beam. That done, he shook his matted hair from about his eyes, and tried them. Strong and fast.

"The fence between this wharf and the next is easily climbed," said the dwarf, when he had taken these precautions. "There's a back lane too from there. That shall be my way out. A man need know his road well, to find it in this lovely place to-night. I need fear no unwelcome visiters while this lasts, I think."

Almost reduced to the necessity of groping his way with his hands, (it had grown so dark, and the fog had so much increased,) he returned to his lair; and after musing for some time over the fire, busied himself in preparations for a speedy departure.

While he was collecting a few necessaries, and cramming them into his pockets, he never once ceased communing with himself in a low voice, or unclenched his teeth, which he had ground together on finishing Miss Brass's note.

"Oh, Sampson!" he muttered, "good, worthy creature—If I could but hug you! If I could only fold you in my arms, and squeeze your ribs, as I *could* squeeze them if I once had you tight, what a meeting there would be between us! If we ever *do* cross each other again, Sampson, we 'll have a greeting not easily to be forgotten, trust me. This time, Sampson, this moment when all had gone on so well, was so nicely chosen! It was so thoughtful of you, so penitent, so good. Oh, if we were face to face in this room again, my white-livered man of law, how well contented one of us would be!"

There he stopped; and raising the bowl of punch to his lips, drank a long, deep draught, as if it were fair water and cooling to his parched mouth. Setting it down abruptly, and resuming his preparations, he went on with his soliloquy.

"There 's Sally," he said, with flashing eyes; "the woman has a spirit, determination, purpose—was she asleep, or petrified? She could have stabbed him—poisoned him safely. She might have seen this coming on. Why does she give me notice when it's too late? When he sat there—yonder there, over there—with his white face, and red hair, and sickly smile, why didn't I know what was passing in his heart! It should have stopped beating that night, if I had been in his secret; or there are no drugs to lull a man to sleep, and no fire to burn him!"

Another draught from the bowl; and

covering over the fire with a ferocious aspect, he muttered to himself again;

"And this, like every other trouble and anxiety I have had of late times, springs from that old dotard and his darling child, two wretched, feeble wanderers. I'll be their evil genius yet. And you, sweet Kit, honest Kit, virtuous, innocent Kit, look to yourself. Where I hate, I bite. I hate you, my darling fellow, with good cause, and proud as you are, to-night I'll have my turn. What's that?"

A knocking at the gate he had closed. A loud and violent knocking—then a pause—as if those who knocked, had stopped to listen. Then the noise again, more clamorous and importunate than before.

"So soon!" said the dwarf. "And so eager! I am afraid I shall disappoint you. It is well I'm quite prepared. Sally, I thank you!"

As he spoke, he extinguished the candle. In his impetuous attempts to subdue the brightness of the fire, he overset the stove, which came tumbling forward, and fell with a crash upon the burning embers it had shot forth in its descent, leaving the room in pitchy darkness. The noise at the gate still continuing, he felt his way to the door, and stepped into the open air.

At that moment the knocking ceased. It was about eight o'clock; but the dead of the darkest night would have been as noon-day, in comparison with the thick cloud which then rested upon the earth, and shrouded every thing from view. He darted forward a few paces, as if into the mouth of some dim, yawning cavern; then, thinking he had gone wrong, changed the direction of his steps; then stood still, not knowing how to turn.

"If they would knock again," said Quilp, trying to peer into the gloom by which he was surrounded, "the sound might guide me. Come. Batter the gate once more!"

He stood listening intently, but the noise was not renewed. Nothing was to be heard in the deserted place, but at intervals the distant barking of dogs. The sound was far away—now in one quarter, now answered in another—nor was it any guide, for it often came from shipboard, as he knew.

"If I could find a wall or fence," said the dwarf, stretching out his arms, and walking slowly on, "I should know which way to turn. A good, black devil's night this, to have my dear friend here. If I had but that wish, it might, for any thing I cared, never be day again."

As the word passed his lips, he staggered and fell; and the next moment was fighting with the cold dark water.

For all its bubbling up and rushing in his ears, he could hear the knocking at the gate again—could hear a shout that followed it—could recognize the voice. For all his struggling and plashing, he could understand that they had lost their way, and had wandered back to the point from which they started; that they were all but looking on while he was drowning; that they were close at hand, but could not make an effort to save him; that he himself had shut and barred them out. He answered the shout—with a yell that seemed to make the hundred fires that danced before his eyes tremble and flicker as if a gust of wind had stirred them. It was of no avail. The strong tide filled his throat, and bore him on, upon its rapid current.

Another mortal struggle, and he was up again, beating the water with his hands, and looking out with wild and glaring eyes that showed him some black object he was drifting close upon. The hull of a ship! He could touch its smooth and slippery surface with his hand. One loud cry now—but the resistless water bore him down before he could give it utterance, and, driving him under it, carried away a corpse.

It toyed and sported with its ghastly freight, now bruising it against the slimy piles, now hiding it in mud or long rank grass, now dragging it heavily over rough stones and gravel, now feigning to yield it to its own element, and in the same action luring it away, until tired of the ugly plaything, it flung it on a swamp—a dismal place where pirates had swung in chains, through many a wintry night—and left it there to bleach.

And there it lay, alone. The sky was red with flame, and the water that bore it there had been tinged with the sullen light as it flowed along. The place the deserted carcase had left so recently, a living man, was now a blazing ruin. There was something of the glare upon its face. The hair, stirred by the damp breeze, played in a kind of mockery of death—such a mockery as the dead man himself would have revelled in when alive—about its head, and its dress fluttered idly in the night-wind.

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-EIGHTH.

Lighted rooms, bright fires, cheerful faces, the music of glad voices, words of love and welcome, warm hearts, and tears of happiness — what a change is this! But it is to such delights that Kit is hastening. They are awaiting him, he knows. He fears he will die of joy before he gets among them.

They have prepared him for this, all day. He is not to be carried off to-morrow with the rest, they tell him first. By degrees they let him know that doubts have arisen, that inquiries are to be made, and perhaps he may be pardoned after all. At last, the evening being come, they bring him to a room where some gentlemen are assembled. Foremost among them is his good old master, who comes and takes him by the hand. He hears that his innocence is established, and that he is pardoned. He cannot see the speaker, but he turns toward the voice, and, in trying to answer, falls down insensible.

They recover him again, and tell him he must be composed, and bear this like a man. Somebody says he must think of his poor mother. It is because he does think of her so much, that the happy news had overpowered him. They crowd about him, and tell him that the truth has gone abroad, and that all the town and country ring with sympathy for his misfortunes. He has no ears to this. His thoughts as yet have no wider range than home. Does *she* know it?—what did she say who told her? He can speak of nothing else.

They make him drink a little wine, and talk kindly to him for a while, until he is more collected, and can listen, and thank them. He is free to go. Mr. Garland thinks, if he feels better, it is time they went away. The gentlemen cluster round him, and shake hands with him. He feels very grateful to them for the interest they have in him, and for the kind promises they make; but the power of speech is gone again, and he has much ado to keep his feet, even though leaning on his master's arm.

As they pass through the dismal passages, some officers of the jail who are in waiting there, congratulate him in their rough way on his release. The newsmonger is of the number, but his manner is not quite hearty — there is something of surliness in his compliments. He looks upon Kit as an intruder, as one who has obtained admission to that place on false pretences; who has enjoyed a privilege without being duly qualified. He may be a very good sort of a young man, he thinks, but he has no business there, and the sooner he is gone, the better.

The last door shuts behind him. They have passed the outer wall, and stand in the open air — in the street he has so often pictured to himself when hemmed in by those gloomy stones, and which has been in all his dreams. It seems wider and more busy than it used to be. The night is bad, and yet how cheerful and gay in his eyes! One of the gentlemen, in taking leave of him, pressed some money into his hand. He has not counted it; but when they have gone a few paces beyond the box for poor prisoners, he hastily returns and drops it in.

Mr. Garland has a coach waiting in a neighbouring street, and taking Kit inside with him, bids the man drive home. At first they can only travel at a foot pace, and then with torches going on before, because of the heavy fog. But as they get further from the river, and leave the closer portions of the town behind, they are able to dispense with this precaution and to proceed at a brisker rate. On the road, hard galloping would be too slow for Kit, but when they are drawing near their journey's end he begs they may go more slowly, and when the house appears in sight, that they may stop — only for a minute or two, to give time to breathe.

But there is no stopping then, for the old gentleman speaks stoutly to him, the horses mend their pace, and they are already at the garden-gate. Next minute they are at the door. There is a noise of tongues, and tread of feet, inside. It opens. Kit rushes in, and finds his mother clinging round his neck.

And there, too, is the ever-faithful Barbara's mother, still holding the baby as if she had never put it down since that sad day, when they little hoped to have such joy as this—there she is, heaven bless her, crying her eyes out, and sobbing as never woman sobbed before; and there is little Barbara — poor little Barbara, so much thinner, and so much paler, and yet so very pretty — trembling like a leaf, and supporting herself against the wall: and there is Mrs. Garland, neater and nicer than ever, fainting away stone dead, with nobody to help her; and there is Mr. Abel, violently blowing his nose, and wanting to embrace everybody; and there is the

single gentleman hovering round them all, and constant to nothing for an instant; and there is that good, dear, thoughtful little Jacob, sitting all alone by himself on the bottom stair, with his hands on his knees, like an old man, roaring fearfully without giving any trouble to anybody; and each and all of them are for the time clean out of their wits, and do jointly and severally commit all manner of follies.

And even when the rest have in some measure come to themselves again, and can find words and smiles, Barbara—that soft-hearted, gentle, foolish little Barbara—is suddenly missed, and found to be in a swoon by herself, in the back parlour, from which swoon she falls into hysterics, and from which hysterics into a swoon again, and is, indeed, so bad, that, despite a mortal quantity of vinegar and cold water, she is hardly a bit better at last, than she was at first. Then Kit's mother comes in and says, will he come and speak to her; and Kit says, "Yes," and goes; and he says in a kind voice "Barbara!" and Barbara's mother tells her that "it's only Kit;" and Barbara says, (with her eyes closed all the time) "Oh! but is it him indeed?" and Barbara's mother says, "To be sure it is, my dear; there's nothing the matter now." And in further assurance, that he's safe and sound, Kit speaks to her again; and then Barbara goes off into another fit of laughter, and then into another fit of crying—and then Barbara's mother and Kit's mother nod to each other, and then pretend to scold her—but only to bring her to herself the faster, bless you—and being experienced matrons, and acute at perceiving the first dawning symptoms of recovery, they comfort Kit with the assurance that "she'll do now," and so dismiss him to the place whence he came.

Well! In that place (which is the next room) there are decanters of wine, and all that sort of thing, set out as grand as if Kit and his friends were first-rate company; and there is little Jacob, walking, as the popular phrase is, into a home-made plum cake, at a most surprising pace, and keeping his eye on the figs and oranges which are to follow, and making the best use of his time you may well believe. Kit no sooner comes in, than that single gentleman (never was such a busy gentleman) charges all the glasses—bumpers—and drinks his health, and tells him he shall never want a friend while he lives; and so does Mr. Garland, so does Mrs. Garland, and so does Mr. Abel. But even this honour and distinction is not all, for the single gentleman forthwith pulls out of his pocket a massive silver watch, going hard, and right to half a second—and upon the back of this is engraved Kit's name, with flourishes all over; and in short, it is Kit's watch, bought expressly for him, and presented to him on the spot. You may rest assured that Mr. and Mrs. Garland can't help hinting about their present in store, and that Mr. Abel tells outright that he has his; and that Kit is the happiest of the happy.

There is one friend he has not seen yet, and as he cannot be conveniently introduced into the family circle, by reason of his being an iron-shod quadruped, Kit takes the first opportunity of slipping away and hurrying to the stable. The moment he lays his hand upon the latch, the pony neighs the loudest pony's greeting; before he has crossed the threshold, the pony is capering about his loose box (for he brooks not the indignity of a halter,) mad to give him welcome; and when Kit goes up to caress and pat him, the pony rubs his nose against his coat, and fondles him more lovingly than ever pony fondled man. It is the crowning circumstance of his earnest, heartfelt reception, and Kit fairly puts his arm round Whisker's neck and hugs him.

But how comes Barbara to trip in there? and how smart she is again! she has been at her glass since she recovered. How comes Barbara in the stable, of all places in the world? Why, since Kit has been away, the pony would take his food from nobody but her; and Barbara, you see, not dreaming Christopher was there, and just looking in to see that every thing was right, has come upon him unawares. Blushing little Barbara!

It may be that Kit has caressed the pony enough; it may be that there are even better things to caress than ponies. He leaves him for Barbara, at any rate, and hopes she is better. Yes, Barbara is a great deal better. She is afraid—and here Barbara looks down and blushes more—that he must have thought her very foolish. "Not at all," says Kit. Barbara is glad of that, and coughs—Hem!—just the slightest cough possible—not more than that.

What a discreet pony, when he chooses! He is as quiet now as if he were of marble. He has a very knowing look, but that he always has. "We have hardly had time to shake hands, Barbara," says Kit. Barbara gives him hers. Why, she is trembling now! Foolish, fluttering Barbara!

Arm's length! The length of an arm is not much. Barbara's was not a long arm by any means; and, besides, she

didn't hold it out straight, but bent a little. Kit was so near her when they shook hands that he could see a small, tiny tear yet trembling on her eyelash. It was natural that he should look at it, unknown to Barbara. It was natural that Barbara should raise her eyes unconsciously and find him out. Was it natural that at that instant without any previous impulse or design, Kit should kiss Barbara? He did it, whether or no. Barbara said "For shame," but let him do it too—twice. He might have done it thrice, but the pony kicked up his heels and shook his head, as if he were suddenly taken with convulsions of delight, and Barbara, being frightened, ran away—not straight to where her mother and Kit's mother were though, lest they should see how red her cheeks were, and should ask her why. Sly little Barbara!

When the first transports of the whole party had subsided, and Kit and his mother, and Barbara and her mother, with little Jacob and the baby to boot, had had their suppers together—which there was no hurrying over, for they were going to stop there all night—Mr. Garland called Kit to him, and, taking him into a room where they could be alone, told him that he had something yet to say, which would surprise him greatly. Kit looked so anxious and turned so pale on hearing this that the old man hastened to add he would be agreeably surprised, and asked him if he would be ready next morning for a journey.

"For a journey, sir!" cried Kit.

"In company with me and my friend in the next room. Can you guess its purpose?"

Kit turned paler yet, and shook his head.

"Oh yes! I think you do already," said his master. "Try."

Kit murmured something rather rambling and unintelligible, but he plainly pronounced the words "Miss Nell" three or four times—shaking his head while he did so, as if he would add there was no hope of that.

But Mr. Garland, instead of saying "Try again," as Kit had made sure he would, told him very seriously that he had guessed right.

"The place of their retreat is indeed discovered," he said, "at last; and that is our journey's end."

Kit faltered out such questions as where it was, and how had it been found, and how long since, and was she well, and happy.

"Happy she is, beyond all doubt," said Mr. Garland; "and well, I—I trust she will be soon. She has been weak and ailing, as I learn, but she was better when I heard this morning, and they were full of hope. Sit you down, and you shall hear the rest."

Scarcely venturing to draw a breath, Kit did as he was told. Mr. Garland then related to him how he had a brother, (of whom he would remember to have heard him speak, and whose picture, taken when he was a young man, hung in the best room,) and how this brother lived a long way off in a country-seat, with an old clergyman who had been his early friend. How, although they loved each other as brothers should, they had not met for many years, but had communicated by letter from time to time, always looking forward to some period when they would take each other by the hand once more, and still letting the Present time steal on, as it was the habit of men to do, and suffering the Future to melt into the Past. How this brother, whose temper was very mild and quiet and retiring—such as Mr. Abel's—was greatly beloved by the simple people among whom he dwelt, who quite revered the bachelor, (for they so called him,) and every one had experienced his charity and benevolence. How even these slight circumstances had come to his knowledge very slowly, and in course of years, for the bachelor was one of those whose goodness shuns the light, and who have more pleasure in discovering and extolling the good deeds of others, than in trumpeting their own, be they ever so commendable. How, for that reason, he seldom told them to his village friends; but how, for all that, his mind had become so full of two among them—a child and an old man, to whom he had been very kind—that in a letter, received a few days before, he had dwelt upon them from first to last, and had told there such a tale of their wanderings and mutual love that few could read it without being moved to tears. How he, the recipient of that letter, was directly led to the belief that these must be the very wanderers for whom so much search had been made, and whom Heaven had directed to his brother's care. How he had written for such further information as would put the fact beyond all doubt; how it had that morning arrived; had confirmed his first impression into a certainty; and was the immediate cause of that journey being planned which they were to take to-morrow.

"In the mean time," said the old gentleman, rising and laying his hand on Kit's shoulder, "you have great need of rest, for such a day as this would wear out the strongest man. Good night, and Heaven send our journey may have a prosperous ending!"

CHAPTER THE SIXTY-NINTH.

Kit was no sluggard next morning, but springing from his bed some time before day, began to prepare for his welcome expedition. The hurry of spirits consequent upon the events of yesterday, and the unexpected intelligence he had heard at night, had troubled his sleep through the long dark hours, and summoned such uneasy dreams about his pillow that it was rest to rise.

But had it been the beginning of some great labour with the same end in view—had it been the commencement of a long journey, to be performed on foot in that inclement season of the year; to be pursued under every privation and difficulty; and to be achieved only with great distress, fatigue, and suffering—had it been the dawn of some painful enterprise, certain to task his utmost powers of resolution and endurance, and to need his utmost fortitude, but only likely to end, if happily achieved, in good fortune and delight to Nell—Kit's cheerful zeal would have been as highly roused, Kit's ardour and impatience would have been at least the same.

Nor was he alone excited and eager. Before he had been up a quarter of an hour the whole house were astir and busy. Everybody hurried to do something toward facilitating the preparations. The single gentleman, it is true, could do nothing himself, but he overlooked everybody else, and was more locomotive than anybody. The work of packing and making ready went briskly on, and by day-break every preparation for the journey was completed. Then Kit began to wish they had not been quite so nimble; for the travelling-carriage, which had been hired for the occasion, was not to arrive until nine o'clock, and there was nothing but breakfast to fill up the intervening blank of one hour and a half.

Yes there was, though. There was Barbara. Barbara was busy, to be sure, but so much the better—Kit could help her, and that would pass away the time better than any means that could be devised. Barbara had no objection to this arrangement, and Kit, tracing out the idea which had come upon him so suddenly over-night, began to think that surely Barbara was fond of him, and surely he was fond of Barbara.

Now, Barbara, if the truth must be told—as it must and ought to be, Barbara seemed, of all the little household, to take least pleasure in the bustle of the occasion: and when Kit, in the openness of his heart, told her how glad and overjoyed it made him, Barbara became more downcast still, and seemed to have even less pleasure in it than before!

"You have not been home so long, Christopher," said Barbara—and it is impossible to tell how carelessly she said it—"You have not been home so long, that you need be glad to go away again, I should think."

"But for such a purpose," returned Kit. "To bring back Miss Nell! To see her again! Only think of that! I am so pleased too to think that you will see her, Barbara, at last."

Barbara did not absolutely say that she felt no great gratification on this point, but she expressed the sentiment so plainly by one little toss of her head, that Kit was quite disconcerted, and wondered in his simplicity why she was so cool about it.

"You'll say she has the sweetest and beautifulest face you ever saw, I know," said Kit, rubbing his hands. "I'm sure you'll say that!"

Barbara tossed her head again.

"What's the matter, Barbara?" said Kit.

"Nothing," cried Barbara. And Barbara pouted—not sulkily, or in an ugly manner, but just enough to make her look more cherry-lipped than ever.

There is no school in which a pupil gets on so fast, as that in which Kit became a scholar when he gave Barbara the kiss. He saw what Barbara meant now—he had his lesson by heart all at once—she was the book—there it was before him as plain as print.

"Barbara," said Kit, "you're not cross with me?"

Oh dear no! Why should Barbara be cross? And what right had she to be cross? And what did it matter whether she was cross or no? Who minded *her!*

"Why, *I* do," said Kit. "Of course I do."

Barbara didn't see why it was of course, at all.

Kit was sure she must. Would she think again?

Certainly, Barbara would think. No, she didn't see why it was of course. She didn't understand what Christopher meant. And, besides, she was sure they wanted

ner up stairs by this time, and she must go, indeed——

"No, but Barbara," said Kit, detaining her gently, "let us part friends. I was always thinking of you, in my troubles. I should have been a great deal more miserable than I was, if it hadn't been for you."

Goodness gracious! how pretty Barbara was when she coloured—and when she trembled, like a little shrinking bird!

"I am telling you the truth, Barbara, upon my word, but not half so strong as I could wish," said Kit, earnestly. "When I want you to be pleased to see Miss Nell, it's only because I should like you to be pleased with what pleases me—that's all. As to her, Barbara, I think I could almost die to do her service, but you would think so too if you knew her as I do. I am sure you would."

Barbara was touched, and sorry to have appeared indifferent.

"I have been used, you see," said Kit, "to talk and think of her, almost as if she was an angel. When I look forward to meeting her again, I think of her smiling as she used to do, and being glad to see me, and putting out her hand, and saying, 'It's my own old Kit,' or some such words as those—like what she used to say. I think of seeing her happy, and with friends about her, and brought up as she deserves, and as she ought to be. When I think of myself, it's as her old servant; and one that loved her dearly, as his kind, good, gentle mistress; and who would have gone—yes, and still would go—through any harm to serve her. Once I couldn't help being afraid that if she came back with friends about her she might forget, or be ashamed of having known, a humble lad like me, and so speak coldly, which would have cut me, Barbara, deeper than I can tell. But when I came to think again, I felt sure that I was doing her wrong in this; and so I went on as I did at first, hoping to see her once more, just as she used to be. Hoping this, and remembering what she was, has made me feel as if I would always try to please her, and always be what I should like to seem to her if I was still her servant. If I'm the better for that—and I don't think I'm the worse—I am grateful to her for it; and love and honour her the more. That's the plain, honest truth, dear Barbara, upon my word it is!"

Little Barbara was not of a wayward or capricious nature, but being full of remorse, melted into tears. To what further observations this might have led, we need not stop to inquire; for the wheels of the carriage were heard at that moment, and, being followed by a smart ring at the garden gate caused the bustle in the house, which had laid dormant for a short time, to burst again into tenfold life and vigour.

Simultaneously with the travelling equipage, arrived Mr. Chuckster in a hackney cab, with certain papers and supplies of money for the single gentleman, into whose hands he delivered them. This duty discharged, he subsided into the bosom of the family, and, entertaining himself with a strolling or peripatetic breakfast, watched with a gentle indifference the process of loading the carriage.

"Snobby's in this I see, sir?" he said to Mr. Abel Garland. "I thought he wasn't in the last trip because it was expected that his presence wouldn't be very acceptable to the ancient buffalo."

"To whom, sir?" demanded Mr. Abel.

"To the old gentleman," returned Mr. Chuckster, slightly abashed.

"Our client prefers to take him now," said Mr. Abel drily. "There is no longer any need for that precaution, as my father's relationship to a gentleman in whom the objects of his search have full confidence, will be a sufficient guarrantee for the friendly nature of their errand."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Chuckster, looking out of the window, "anybody but me! Snobby before me, of course. He didn't happen to take that particular five-pound note, but I have not the smallest doubt he's always up to something of that sort. I always said it, long before this came out. Devilish pretty girl that! 'Pon my soul, an amazing little creature!"

Barbara was the subject of Mr. Chuckster's commendations; and as she was lingering near the carriage (all being now ready for its departure), that gentleman was suddenly seized with a strong interest in the proceedings, which impelled him to swagger down the garden, and take up his position at a convenient ogling distance. Having had great experience of the sex, and being perfectly acquainted with all those little artifices which find the readiest road to their hearts, Mr. Chuckster, on taking his ground, planted one hand on his hip, and with the other adjusted his flowing hair. This is a favourite attitude in the polite circles, and accompanied with a graceful whistling has been known to do immense execution.

Such, however, is the difference between town and country, that nobody took the smallest notice of this insinuating figure; the wretches being wholly engaged in bidding the travellers farewell, in kissing hands to each other, waving handkerchiefs, and the like tame and vulgar practices. Fo-

now the single gentleman and Mr. Garland were in the carriage, and the postboy was in the saddle, and Kit, well wrapped and muffled up, was in the rumble behind; and Mrs. Garland was there, and Mr. Abel was there, and Kit's mother was there, and little Jacob was there, and Barbara's mother was visible in remote perspective, nursing the ever wakeful baby; and all were nodding, beckoning, curtsying, or crying out "Good bye!" with all the energy they could express.

In another minute, the carriage was out of sight; and Mr. Chuckster remained alone upon the spot where it had lately been, with a vision of Kit standing up in the rumble waving his hand to Barbara, and of Barbara in the full light and lustre of his eyes—*his* eyes—Chuckster's—Chuckster the successful—on whom ladies of quality had looked with favour from phaetons in the parks on Sundays—waving hers to Kit!

How Mr. Chuckster, entranced by this monstrous fact, stood for some time rooted to the earth, protesting within himself that Kit was the Prince of felonious characters, and very Emperor or Great Mogul of Snobs, and how he clearly traced this revolting circumstance back to that old villany of the shilling, are matters foreign to our purpose; which is, to track the rolling wheels, and bear the travellers company on their cold, bleak journey.

It was a bitter day. A keen wind was blowing, and rushed against them fiercely; bleaching the hard ground, shaking the white frost from the trees and hedges, and whirling it away like dust. But little cared Kit for weather. There was a freedom and freshness in the wind, as it came howling by, which, let it cut never so sharp, was welcome. As it swept on with its cloud of frost, bearing down the dry twigs and boughs and withered leaves, and carrying them away pell-mell, it seemed as though some general sympathy had got abroad, and every thing was in a hurry like themselves. The harder the gusts, the better progress they appeared to make. It was a good thing to go struggling and fighting forward, vanquishing them one by one; to watch them driving up, gathering strength and fury as they came along; to bend for a moment, as they whistled past; and then to look back and see them speed away; their hoarse noise dying in the distance, and the stout trees cowering down before them.

All day long it blew without cessation. The night was clear and starlight, but the wind had not fallen, and the cold was piercing. Sometimes—toward the end of a long stage—Kit could not help wishing it were a little warmer; but when they stopped to change horses, and he had had a good run; what with that, and the bustle of paying the old postilion, and rousing the new one, and running to and fro again until the horses were put to, he was so warm that the blood tingled and smarted in his fingers' ends; then he felt as if to have it one degree less cold would be to lose half the delight and glory of the journey: and up he jumped again right cheerily, singing to the merry music of the wheels as they rolled away, and, leaving the town's people, in their warm beds, pursued their course along the lonely road.

Meantime the two gentlemen inside, who were little disposed to sleep, beguiled the time with conversation. As both were anxious and expectant, it naturally turned upon the subject of their expedition, on the manner in which it had been brought about, and on the hopes and fears they entertained respecting it. Of the former they had many, of the latter few—none perhaps beyond that indefinable uneasiness which is inseparable from suddenly awakened hope, and protracted expectation.

In one of the pauses of their discourse, and when half the night had worn away, the single gentleman, who had gradually become more and more silent and thoughtful, turned to his companion and said abruptly:

"Are you a good listener?"

"Like most other men, I suppose," returned Mr. Garland, smiling. "I can be if I am interested; and if not interested, I should still try to appear so. Why do you ask?

"I have a short narrative on my lips," rejoined his friend, "and will try you with it. It is very brief."

Pausing for no reply, he laid his hand on the old gentleman's sleeve, and proceeded thus:

"There were once two brothers, who loved each other dearly. There was a disparity in their ages—some twelve years. I am not sure but they may insensibly have loved each other the better for that reason. Wide as the interval between them was, however, they became rivals too soon. The deepest and strongest affection of both their hearts settled upon one object.

"The youngest—there were reasons for *his* being sensitive and watchful—was the first to find this out. I will not tell you what misery he underwent, what agony of soul he knew, how great his mental struggle was. He had been a sickly child. His brother, patient and considerate in the midst of his own high health and strength

had many and many a day denied himself the sports he loved, to sit beside his couch, telling him old stories till his pale face lighted up with an unwonted glow; to carry him in his arms to some green spot, where he could tend the poor pensive boy as he looked upon the bright summer day, and saw all nature healthy but himself; to be in any way his fond but faithful nurse. I may not dwell on all he did, to make the poor, weak creature love him, or my tale would have no end. But when the time of trial came, the younger brother's heart was full of those old days. Heaven strengthened it to repay the sacrifices of inconsiderate youth by one of thoughtful manhood. He left his brother to be happy. The truth never passed his lips, and he quitted the country hoping to die abroad.

"The elder brother married her. She was in Heaven before long, and left him with an infant daughter.

"If you have seen the picture gallery of any one old family, you will remember how the face and figure—often the fairest and slightest of them all—come upon you in different generations; and how you trace the same sweet girl through a long line of portraits—never growing old or changing—the Good Angel of the race—abiding by them in all reverses—redeeming all their sins.

"In this daughter the mother lived again. You may judge with what devotion he who lost that mother almost in the winning, clung to this girl, her breathing image. She grew to womanhood, and gave her heart to one who could not know its worth. Well! Her fond father could not see her pine and droop. He might be more deserving than he thought him. He surely might become so with a wife like her. He joined their hands, and they were married.

"Through all the misery that followed this union; through all the cold neglect and undeserved reproach; through all the poverty he brought upon her; through all the struggles of their daily life, too mean and pitiful to tell, but dreadful to endure, she toiled on, in the deep devotion of her spirit, and in her better nature, as only woman can. Her means and substance wasted; her father nearly beggared by her husband's hand, and the hourly witness (for they lived now under one roof) of her ill-usage and unhappiness,—she never, but for him, bewailed her fate. Patient, and upheld by strong affection to the last, she died a widow of some three weeks' date, leaving to her father's care, two orphans, one a son of ten or twelve years old, the other a girl — such another infant child — the same in helplessness, in age, in form, in feature—as she had been herself, when her young mother died.

"The elder brother, grandfather to these two children, was now a broken man; crushed and borne down less by the weight of years, than by the heavy hand of sorrow. With the wreck of his possessions, he began to trade — in pictures first, and then in curious ancient things. He had entertained a fondness for such matters from a boy, and the tastes he had cultivated were now to yield him an anxious and precarious subsistence.

"The boy grew like his father in mind and person; the girl so like her mother that when the old man had her on his knee, and looked into her mild blue eyes, he felt as if awakening from a wretched dream, and his daughter were a little child again. The wayward boy soon spurned the shelter of his roof, and sought associates more congenial to his taste. The old man and the child dwelt alone together.

"It was then, when the love of two dead people who had been nearest and dearest to his heart, was all transferred to this slight creature; when her face, constantly before him, reminded him from hour to hour of the too early change he had seen in such another—of all the suffering he had watched and known, and all his child had undergone; when the young man's profligate and hardened course drained him of money as his father's had, and even sometimes occasioned them temporary privation and distress; it was then that there began to beset him, and to be ever in his mind, a gloomy dread of poverty and want. He had no thought for himself in this. His fear was for the child. It was a spectre in his house, and haunted him night and day.

"The younger brother had been a traveller in many countries, and had made his pilgrimage through life alone. His voluntary banishment had been misconstrued, and he had borne (not without pain) reproach and slight, for doing that which had wrung his heart, and cast a mournful shadow on his path. Apart from this, communication between him and the elder was difficult and uncertain, and often failed; still it was not so wholly broken off but that he learnt—with long blanks and gaps between each interval of information—all that I have told you now.

"Then, dreams of their young, happy life —happy to him though laden with pain and early care — visited his pillow yet oftener than before; and every night, a boy again, he was at his brother's side. With the utmost speed he could exert, he settled his affairs; converted into money

all the goods he had, and with honourable wealth enough for both, with open heart and hand, with limbs that trembled as they bore him on, with emotion such as men can hardly bear and live, arrived one evening at his brother's door!"

The narrator, whose voice had faltered lately, stopped. "The rest," said Mr. Garland, pressing his hand, "I know."

"Yes," rejoined his friend, after a pause, "we may spare ourselves the sequel. You know the poor result of all my search. Even when, by dint of such inquiries as the utmost vigilance and sagacity could set on foot, we found they had been seen with two poor travelling showmen; and in time discovered the men themselves—and in time, the actual place of their retreat; even then, we were too late. Pray God we are not too late again!"

"We cannot be," said Mr. Garland. "This time we must succeed."

"I have believed and hoped so," returned the other. "I try to believe and hope so still. But a heavy weight has fallen on my spirits, my good friend, and the sadness that gathers over me, will yield neither to hope nor reason."

"That does not surprise," said Mr. Garland; "it is a natural consequence of the events you have recalled; of this dreary time and place; and above all, of this wild and dismal night. A dismal night, indeed! Hark! how the wind is howling!"

CHAPTER THE SEVENTIETH.

Day broke, and found them still upon their way. Since leaving home, they had halted here and there for necessary refreshment, and had frequently been delayed, especially in the night time, by waiting for fresh horses. They had made no other stoppages; but the weather continued rough, and the roads were often steep and heavy. It would be night again before they reached their place of destination.

Kit, all bluff and hardened with the cold, went on manfully; and having enough to do to keep his blood circulating, to picture to himself the happy end of this adventurous journey, and to look about him and be amazed at everything, had little spare time for thinking of discomforts. Though his impatience, and that of his fellow-travellers, rapidly increased as the day waned, the hours did not stand still. The short daylight of winter soon faded away, and it was dark again when they had yet many miles to travel.

As it grew dusk, the wind fell: its distant moanings were more low and mournful; and as it came creeping up the road, and rattling covertly among the dry brambles on either hand, it seemed like some great phantom for whom the way was narrow, whose garments rustled as it stalked along. By degrees it lulled and died away; and then it came on to snow.

The flakes fell fast and thick, soon covering the ground some inches deep, and spreading abroad a solemn stillness. The rolling wheels were noiseless; and the sharp ring and clatter of the horses' hoofs, became a dull, muffled tramp. The life of their progress seemed to be slowly hushed, and something death-like to usurp its place.

Shading his eyes from the falling snow, which froze upon their lashes and obscured his sight, Kit often tried to catch the earliest glimpse of twinkling lights denoting their approach to some not far distant town. He could descry objects enough at such times, but none correctly. Now a tall church spire appeared in view, which presently became a tree; a barn; a shadow on the ground, thrown on it by their own bright lamps. Now there were horsemen, foot-passengers, carriages, going on before; or meeting them in narrow ways; which, when they were close upon them, turned to shadows too. A wall, a ruin, a sturdy gable end, would rise up in the road; and when they were plunging headlong at it, would be the road itself. Strange turnings, too, bridges and sheets of water, appeared to start up here and there, making the way doubtful and uncertain; and yet they were on the same bare road, and these things, like the others, as they were passed, turned into dim illusions.

He descended slowly from his seat—for his limbs were numbed—when they arrived at a lone posting-house, and inquired how far they had to go to reach their journey's end. It was a late hour in such by-places, and the people were a-bed; but a voice answered from an upper window, "Ten miles." The ten minutes that ensued appeared an hour; but at the end of that time, a shivering figure led out the horses they required, and after another brief delay, they were again in motion.

It was a cross-country road, full, after the first three or four miles, of holes and cart-ruts, which, being covered by the snow, were so many pitfalls to the trembling horses, and obliged them to keep a

footpace. As it was next to impossible for men so much agitated as they were by this time, to sit still and move so slowly, all three got out and plodded on behind the carriage. The distance seemed interminable, and the walk was most laborious. As each was thinking within himself that the driver must have lost his way, a church bell, close at hand, struck the hour of midnight, and the carriage stopped. It had moved softly enough, but when it ceased to crunch the snow, the silence was as startling as if some great noise had been replaced by perfect stillness.

"This is the place, gentlemen," said the driver, dismounting from his horse, and knocking at the door of a little inn. "Halloa! Past twelve o'clock is the dead hour of night here."

The knocking was loud and long, but it failed to rouse the drowsy inmates. All continued dark and silent as before. They fell back a little, and looked up at the windows, which were mere black patches in the whitened house front. No light appeared. The house might have been deserted, or the sleepers dead, for any air of life it had about it.

They spoke together, with a strange inconsistency, in whispers; unwilling to disturb again the dreary echoes they had just now raised.

"Let us go on," said the younger brother, "and leave this good fellow to wake them, if he can. I cannot rest until I know that we are not too late. Let us go on in the name of Heaven!"

They did so, leaving the postilion to order such accommodation as the house afforded, and to renew his knocking.—Kit accompanied them with a little bundle, which he had hung in the carriage when they left home, and had not forgotten since—the bird in his old cage—just as she had left him. She would be glad to see her bird, he knew.

The road wound gently downward. As they proceeded, they lost sight of the church whose clock they had heard, and of the small village clustering round it. The knocking, which was now renewed, and which in that stillness they could plainly hear, troubled them. They wished the man would forbear, or that they had told him not to break the silence until they returned.

The old church tower, clad in a ghostly garb of pure cold white, again rose up before them, and a few moments brought them close beside it—a venerable building—grey, even in the midst of the hoary landscape. An ancient sun-dial on the belfry was nearly hidden by the snow-drift, and scarcely to be known for what it was. Time itself seemed to have grown dull and old, as if no day were ever to displace the melancholy night.

A wicket gate was close at hand, but there was more than one path across the churchyard to which it led, and, uncertain which to take, they came to a stand again.

The village street—if street that could be called which was an irregular cluster of poor cottages of many heights and ages, some with their fronts, some with their backs, and some with gable ends toward the road, with here and there a signpost or a shed encroaching on the path—was close at hand. There was a faint light in a chamber window not far off, and Kit ran towards that house to ask their way.

His first shout was answered by an old man within, who presently appeared at the casement, wrapping some garment round his throat as a protection from the cold, and demanded who was abroad at that unseasonable hour, wanting him.

"'Tis hard weather, this," he grumbled, "and not a night to call me up in. My trade is not of that kind that I need be roused from bed. The business on which folks want me will keep cold, especially at this season. What do you want?"

"I would not have roused you, if I had known you were old and ill," said Kit.

"Old!" repeated the other, peevishly. "How do you know I am old? Not so old as you think, friend, perhaps. As to being ill, you will find many young people in worse case than I am. More's the pity that it should be so; not that I should be strong and hearty for my years, I mean, but that they should be weak and tender. I ask your pardon, though," said the old man, "if I spoke rather rough at first. My eyes are not good at night—that's neither age nor illness; they never were—and I didn't see you were a stranger."

"I am sorry to call you from your bed," said Kit; "but those gentlemen you may see by the churchyard gate, are strangers too, who have just arrived from a long journey, and seek the parsonage-house. You can direct us?"

"I should be able to," answered the old man, in a trembling voice, "for come next summer I have been sexton here good fifty years. The right-hand path, friend, is the road. There is no ill news for our good gentleman, I hope?"

Kit thanked him, and made him a hasty answer in the negative: he was turning back, when his attention was caught by the voice of a child. Looking up, he saw a very little creature at a neighbouring window.

"What is that?" cried the child, earnestly. "Has my dream come true? Pray

speak to me, whoever that is, awake and up."

"Poor boy!" said the sexton, before Kit could answer, "how goes it, darling?"

"Has my dream come true!" exclaimed the child again, in a voice so fervent that it might have thrilled to the heart of any listener. "But no, that can never be! How could it be—Oh! how could it!"

"I guess his meaning," said the sexton. "To thy bed again, dear boy!"

"Ay!" cried the child, in a burst of despair, "I knew it could never be; I felt too sure of that, before I asked. But all to-night, and last night too, it was the same. I never fall asleep, but that cruel dream comes back."

"Try to sleep again," said the old man, soothingly. "It will go, in time."

"No, no, I would rather that it staid—cruel as it is, I would rather that it staid," rejoined the child. "I am not afraid to have it in my sleep, but I am so sad—so very, very, sad."

The old man blessed him, the child in tears replied, good night, and Kit was again alone.

He hurried back, moved by what he heard, though more by the child's manner, than by anything he had said, as his meaning was hidden from him. They took the path indicated by the sexton, and soon arrived before the parsonage wall. Turning round to look about them, when they had got thus far, they saw, among some ruined buildings at a distance, one solitary light.

It shone from what appeared to be an old oriel window, and being surrounded by the deep shadows of overhanging walls, sparkled like a star. Bright and glimmering as the stars above their heads, lonely and motionless as they, it seemed to claim some kindred with the eternal lamps of heaven, and to burn in fellowship with them.

"What light is that!" exclaimed the younger brother.

"It is surely," said Mr. Garland, "in the ruin where they live. I see no other ruin hereabouts."

"They cannot," returned the brother, hastily, "be waking at this late hour—"

Kit interposed directly, and begged that, while they rang and waited at the gate, they would let him make his way to where this light was shining, and try to ascertain if any people were about. Obtaining the permission he desired, he darted off with breathless eagerness, and, still carrying the bird-cage in his hand, made straight toward the spot.

It was not easy to hold that pace among the graves, and at another time, he might have gone more slowly, or round by the path. Unmindful of all obstacles, however, he pressed forward without slackening his speed, and soon arrived within a few yards of the window.

He approached as softly as he could, and, advancing so near the wall as to brush the whitened ivy with his dress, listened. There was no sound inside. The church itself was no more quiet. Touching the glass with his cheek, he listened again. No. And yet there was such a silence all around, that he felt sure he could have heard even the breathing of a sleeper, if there had been one there.

A strange circumstance, a light in such a place at that time of night, with no one near it.

A curtain was drawn across the lower portion of the window, and he could not see into the room. But there was no shadow thrown upon it from within. To have gained a footing on the wall and tried to look in from above, would have been attended with some danger—certainly with some noise, and the chance of terrifying the child, if that really were her habitation Again and again he listened; and again the same wearisome blank.

Leaving the spot with slow and cautious steps, and skirting the ruin for a few paces, he came at length to a door. He knocked. No answer. But there was a curious noise inside. It was difficult to determine what it was. It bore a resemblance to the low moaning of one in pain, but it was not that, being far too regular and constant. Now it seemed a kind of song, now a wail—seemed, that is, to his changing fancy, for the sound itself was never changed or checked. It was unlike anything he had ever heard, and in its tone there was something fearful, chilling, and unearthly.

The listener's blood ran colder now than ever it had done in frost and snow, but he knocked again. There was no answer, and the sound went on without any interruption. He laid his hand softly upon the latch, and put his knee against the door. It was not secured on the inside, but yielded to the pressure, and turned upon its hinges. He saw the glimmering of a fire upon the old walls, and entered.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTY-FIRST.

The dull, red glow of a wood fire — for no lamp or candle burnt within the room—showed him a figure, seated on the hearth with its back towards him, bending over the fitful light. The attitude was that of one who sought the heat. It was, and yet was not. The stooping posture and the cowering form were there, but no hands were stretched out to meet the grateful warmth, no shrug or shiver compared its luxury with the piercing cold outside. With limbs huddled together, head bowed down, arms crossed upon the breast, and fingers tightly clenched, it rocked to and fro upon its seat without a moment's pause, accompanying the action with the mournful sound he had heard.

The heavy door had closed behind him on his entrance, with a crash that made him start. The figure neither spoke nor turned to look, nor gave in any other way the faintest sign of having heard the noise. The form was that of an old man, his white head akin in colour to the mouldering embers upon which he gazed. And the failing light and dying fire, the time-worn room, the solitude, the wasted life, and gloom, were all in fellowship. Ashes, and dust, and ruin!

Kit tried to speak, and did pronounce some words, though what they were he scarcely knew. Still the same terrible low cry went on—still the same rocking in the chair—the same stricken figure was there, unchanged and heedless of his presence.

He had his hand upon the latch, when something in the form—distinctly seen as one log broke and fell, and, as it fell, blazed up—arrested it. He returned to where he had stood before — advanced a pace — another—another still. Another, and he saw the face. Yes! Changed as it was, he knew it well.

"Master!" he cried, stooping on one knee and catching at his hand. "Dear master. Speak to me!"

The old man turned slowly towards him; and muttered, in a hollow voice,

"This is another! — How many of these spirits there have been to-night!"

"No spirit, master. No one but your old servant. You know me now, I am sure! Miss Nell—where is she—where is she!"

"They all say that!" cried the old man. "They all ask the same question. A spirit!"

"Where is she?" demanded Kit. "Oh tell me but that— but that, dear master."

"She is asleep — yonder — in there."

"Thank God!"

"Ay! Thank God!" returned the old man. "I have prayed to Him, many, and many, and many a livelong night, when she has been asleep, He knows. Hark! Did she call?"

"I heard no voice."

"You did. You hear her now. Do you tell me that you don't hear *that?*"

He started up, and listened again.

"Nor that?" he cried, with a triumphant smile. "Can anybody know that voice so well as I! Hush! hush!"

Motioning to him to be silent, he stole away into another chamber. After a short absence (during which he could be heard to speak in a softened soothing tone) he returned, bearing in his hand a lamp.

"She is still asleep," he whispered. "You were right. She did not call — unless she did so in her slumber. She has called to me in her sleep before now, sir; as I sat by, watching, I have seen her lips move, and have known, though no sound came from them, that she spoke of me. I feared the light might dazzle her eyes and wake her, so I brought it here."

He spoke rather to himself than to his visiter, but when he had put the lamp upon the table, he took it up, as if impelled by some momentary recollection or curiosity, and held it near the other's face. Then, as if forgetting his motive in the very action, he turned away and put it down again.

"She is sleeping soundly," he said; "but no wonder. Angel hands have strewn the ground deep with snow, that the lightest footstep may be lighter yet; and the very birds are dead, that they may not wake her. She used to feed them, sir. Though never so cold and hungry, the timid things would fly from us. They never flew from her!"

Again he stopped to listen, and scarcely drawing breath, listened for a long, long time. That fancy past, he opened an old chest, took out some clothes as fondly as if they had been living things, and began to smooth and brush them with his hand.

"Why dost thou lie so idle there, dear

Nell," he murmured, "when there are bright red berries out of doors waiting for thee to pluck them? Why dost thou lie so idle there, when thy little friends come creeping to the door, crying 'where is Nell — sweet Nell?'— and sob, and weep, because they do not see thee. She was always gentle with children. The wildest would do her biddding — she had a tender way with them, indeed she had!"

Kit had no power to speak. His eyes were filled with tears.

"Her little homely dress, — her favourite!" cried the old man, pressing it to his breast, and patting it with his shrivelled hand. "She will miss it when she wakes. They have hid it here in sport, but she shall have it — she shall have it. I would not vex my darling for the wide world's riches. See here — these shoes — how worn they are — she kept them to remind her of our last long journey. You see where the little feet were bare upon the ground. They told me, afterwards, that the stones had cut and bruised them. *She* never told me that. No, no, God bless her, and I have remembered since, she walked behind me, sir, that I might not see how lame she was—but yet she had my hand in hers, and seemed to lead me still."

He pressed them to his lips, and having carefully put them back again, went on communing with himself—looking wistfully from time to time towards the chamber he had lately visited.

"She was not wont to be a lie-abed; but she was well then. We must have patience. When she is well again, she will rise early, as she used to do, and ramble abroad in the healthy morning time. I often tried to track the way she had gone, but her small fairy footstep left no print upon the dewy ground, to guide me. Who is that? Shut the door. Quick!—Have we not enough to do to drive away that marble cold, and keep her warm!"

The door was indeed opened, for the entrance of Mr. Garland and his friend, accompanied by two other persons. These were the schoolmaster, and the bachelor. The former held a light in his hand. He had, it seemed, but gone to his own cottage to replenish the exhausted lamp, at the moment when Kit came up and found the old man alone.

He softened again at the sight of these two friends, and laying aside the angry manner—if to anything so feeble and so sad the term can be applied—in which he had spoken when the door opened, resumed his former seat, and subsided, by little and little, into the old action, and the old, dull, wandering sound.

Of the strangers he took no heed whatever. He had seen them, but appeared quite incapable of interest or curiosity. The younger brother stood apart. The bachelor drew a chair towards the old man, and sat down close beside him. After a long silence, he ventured to speak.

"Another night, and not in bed!" he said softly. "I hoped you would be mindful of your promise to me. Why do you not take some rest?"

"Sleep has left me," returned the old man. "It is all with her!"

"It would pain her very much to know that you were watching thus," said the bachelor. "You would not give her pain?"

"I am not sure of that, if it would only rouse her. She has slept so very long. And yet I am rash to say so. It is a good and happy sleep—eh?"

"Indeed it is," returned the bachelor. "Indeed, indeed, it is!"

"That's well!—and the waking,"—faltered the old man.

"Happy too. Happier than tongue can tell, or heart of man conceive."

They watched him as he rose and stole on tiptoe to the other chamber where the lamp had been replaced. They listened as he spoke again within its silent walls. They looked into the faces of each other, and no man's cheek was free from tears. He came back, whispering that she was still asleep, but that he thought she had moved. It was her hand, he said—a little—a very, very, little—but he was pretty sure she had moved it — perhaps in seeking his. He had known her to do that before now, though in the deepest sleep the while. And when he had said this, he dropped into his chair again, and clasping his hands above his head, uttered a cry never to be forgotten.

The poor schoolmaster motioned to the bachelor that he would come upon the other side, and speak to him. They gently unlocked his fingers, which he had twisted in his grey hair, and pressed them in their own.

"He will hear me," said the schoolmaster, "I am sure. He will hear either me or you if we beseech him. She would, at all times."

"I will hear any voice she liked to hear," cried the old man. "I love all she loved!"

"I know you do," returned the schoolmaster. "I am certain of it. Think of her; think of all the sorrows and afflictions you have shared together; of all the trials, and all the peaceful pleasures, you have jointly known."

"I do. I do. I think of nothing else.'

"I would have you think of nothing else to-night—of nothing but those things which will soften your heart, dear friend, and open it to old affections and old times. It is so that she would speak to you herself, and in her name it is that I speak now."

"You do well to speak softly," said the old man. "We will not wake her. I should be glad to see her eyes again, and to see her smile. There is a smile upon her young face now, but it is fixed and changeless. I would have it come and go. That shall be in Heaven's good time. We will not wake her."

"Let us not talk of her in her sleep, but as she used to be when you were journeying together, far away—as she was at home, in the old house from which you fled together—as she was in the old cheerful time," said the schoolmaster.

"She was always cheerful—very cheerful," cried the old man, looking steadfast at him. "There was ever something mild and quiet about her, I remember, from the first; but she was of a happy nature."

"We have heard you say," pursued the schoolmaster, "that in this, and in all goodness, she was like her mother. You can think of, and remember her."

He maintained his steadfast look, but gave no answer.

"Or even one before her," said the bachelor. "It is many years ago, and affliction makes the time longer, but you have not forgotten her whose death contributed to make this child so dear to you, even before you knew her worth or could read her heart? Say, that you could carry back your thoughts to very distant days—to the time of your early life—when, unlike this fair flower, you did not pass your youth alone. Say, that you could remember, long ago, another child who loved you dearly, you being but a child yourself. Say, that you had a brother, long forgotten, long unseen, long separated from you, who now, at last, in your utmost need, came back to comfort and console you"—

"To be to you what you were once to him," cried the younger, falling on his knee before him; "to repay your old affection, brother dear, by constant care, solicitude, and love; to be, at your right hand, what he did never cease to be when oceans rolled between us; to call to witness his unchanging truth and mindfulness of bygone days, whole years of desolation. Give me but one word of recognition, brother—and never—no never, in the brightest moment of our youngest days, when, poor silly boys, we thought to pass our lives together—have we been half as dear and precious to each other as we shall be from this time hence."

The old man looked from face to face, and his lips moved; but no sound came from them in reply.

"If we were knit together then," pursued the younger brother, "what will be the bond between us now! Our love and fellowship began in childhood, when life was all before us, and will be resumed when we have proved it, and are but children at the last. As many restless spirits, who have hunted fortune, fame, or pleasure through the world, retire in their decline to where they first drew breath, vainly seeking to be children once again before they die, so we, less fortunate than they in early life, but happier in its closing scenes, will set up our rest again among our boyish haunts; and going home with no hope realised, that had its growth in manhood—carrying back nothing that we brought away, but our old yearnings to each other—saving no fragment from the wreck of life, but that which first endeared it—may be indeed but children as at first. And even," he added in an altered voice, "even if what I dread to name has come to pass—even if that be so, or is to be (which Heaven forbid and spare us!)—still, dear brother, we are not apart, and have that comfort in our great affliction."

By little and little, the old man had drawn back towards the inner chamber, while these words were spoken. He pointed there, as he replied, with trembling lips,

"You plot among you to wean my heart from her. You never will do that—never while I have life. I have no relative or friend but her—I never had—I never will have. She is all in all to me. It is too late to part us now."

Waving them off with his hand, and calling softly to her as he went, he stole into the room. They who were left behind drew close together, and after a few whispered words—not unbroken by emotion, or easily uttered—followed him. They moved so gently, that their footsteps made no noise; but there were sobs from among the group, and sounds of grief and mourning.

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. "When I die, put near me some-

thing that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell, was dead. Her little bird—a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. His was the true death before their weeping eyes. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed like a dream through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.

The old man held one languid arm in

his, and that the small hand tight folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile — the hand that had led him on through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and as he said it he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast—the garden she had tended—the eyes she had gladdened—the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour — the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday—could know her no more.

"It is not," said the schoolmaster, as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek, and gave his tears free vent, "it is not in this world that Heaven's justice ends. Think what it is compared with the world to which her young spirit has winged its early flight, and say, if one deliberate wish expressed in solemn terms above this bed could call her back to life, which of us would utter it!"

CHAPTER THE SEVENTY-SECOND.

When morning came, and they could speak more calmly on the subject of their grief, they heard how her life had closed.

She had been dead two days. They were all about her at the time, knowing that the end was drawing on. She died soon after daybreak. They had read and talked to her in the earlier portion of the night, but as the hours crept on, she sunk to sleep. They could tell, by what she faintly uttered in her dreams, that they were of her journeyings with the old man; they were of no painful scenes, but of those who had helped and used them kindly, for she often said "God bless you!" with great fervour. Waking, she never wandered in her mind but once, and that was at beautiful music which she said was in the air. God knows. It may have been.

Opening her eyes at last, from a very quiet sleep, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile upon her face — such, they said, as they had never seen, and never could forget — and clung with both her arms about his neck. They did not know that she was dead at first.

She had spoken very often of the two sisters, who, she said, were like dear friends to her. She wished they could be told how much she thought about them, and how she had watched them as they walked together by the river side at night. She would like to see poor Kit, she had often said of late. She wished there was somebody to take her love to Kit. And even then, she never thought or spoke about him, but with something of her old, clear, merry laugh.

For the rest, she had never murmured or complained; but, with a quiet mind, and manner quite unaltered — save that she every day became more earnest and more grateful to them—faded like the light upon the summer's evening.

The child who had been her little friend came there almost as soon as it was day, with an offering of dried flowers which he begged them to lay upon her breast. It was he who had come to the window overnight and spoken to the sexton, and they saw in the snow traces of small feet, where he had been lingering near the room in which she lay before he went to bed. He had a fancy, it seemed, that they had left her there alone; and could not bear the thought.

He told them of his dream again, and that it was of her being restored to them, just as she used to be. He begged hard to see her, saying that he would be very quiet, and that they need not fear his being alarmed, for he had sat alone by his younger brother all day long, when *he* was dead and had felt glad to be so near him. They let him have his wish; and indeed he kept his word, and was in his childish way a lesson to them all.

Up to that time, the old man had not spoken once — except to her — or stirred from the bedside. But when he saw her little favourite, he was moved as they had not seen him yet, and made as though he would have him come nearer. Then pointing to the bed, he burst into tears for the first time, and they who stood by, knowing that the sight of this child had done him good left them alone together.

Soothing him with his artless talk of her, the child persuaded him to take some rest, to walk abroad, to do almost as he desired him. And when the day came on, which must remove her in her earthly shape from earthly eyes for ever, he led him away, that he might not know when she was taken from him.

They were to gather fresh leaves and berries for her bed. It was Sunday — a bright, clear, wintry afternoon—and as they traversed the village street, those who were walking in their path drew back to make way for them, and gave them a softened greeting. Some shook the old man kindly by the hand, some stood uncovered while he tottered by, and many cried "God help him!" as he passed along.

"Neighbour!" said the old man, stopping at the cottage where his young guide's mother dwelt, "how is it that the folks are nearly all in black to-day? I have seen a mourning ribbon or a piece of crape on almost every one."

She could not tell, the woman said.

"Why, you yourself—you wear the colour too!" he cried. "Windows are closed that never used to be by day. What does this mean?"

Again the woman said she could not tell.

"We must go back," said the old man, hurriedly. "We must see what this is."

"No, no," cried the child, detaining him. "Remember what you promised. Our way is to the old green lane, where she and I so often were, and where you found us more

than once making those garlands for her garden. Do not turn back!"

"Where is she now?" said the old man. "Tell me that."

"Do you not know?" returned the child. "Did we not leave her, but just now?"

"True. True. It *was* her we left—was it!"

He pressed his hand upon his brow, looked vacantly round, and as if impelled by a sudden thought, crossed the road, and entered the sexton's house. He and his deaf assistant were sitting before the fire. Both rose up, on seeing who it was.

The child made a hasty sign to them with his hand. It was the action of an instant, but that, and the old man's look, were quite enough.

"Do you—do you bury any one to-day?" he said eagerly.

"No, no! Who should we bury, sir?" returned the sexton.

"Ay, who indeed! I say with you, who indeed!"

"It is a holiday with us, good sir," returned the sexton mildly. "We have no work to do to-day."

"Why then, I'll go where you will," said the old man, turning to the child. "You're sure of what you tell me? You would not deceive me? I am changed even in the little time since you last saw me."

"Go thy ways with him, sir," cried the sexton, "and Heaven be with ye both!"

"I am quite ready," said the old man, meekly. "Come, boy, come—" and so submitted to be led away.

And now the bell—the bell she had so often heard by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure almost as a living voice—rung its remorseless toll for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy, poured forth—on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life—to gather round her tomb. Old men were there, whose eyes were dim and senses failing—grandmothers, who might have died ten years ago, and still been old—the deaf, the blind, the lame, the palsied, the living dead in many shapes and forms, to see the closing of that early grave. What was the death it would shut in, to that which still could crawl and creep above it!

Along the crowded path they bore her now; pure as the newly-fallen snow that covered it; whose day on earth had been as fleeting. Under that porch, where she had sat when Heaven in its mercy brought her to that peaceful spot, she passed again, and the old church received her in its quiet shade.

They carried her to one old nook, where she had many and many a time sat musing, and laid their burden softly on the pavement. The light streamed on it through the coloured window—a window, where the boughs of trees were ever rustling in the summer, and where the birds sang sweetly all day long. With every breath of air that stirred among those branches in the sunshine, some trembling, changing light, would fall upon her grave.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Many a young hand dropped in its little wreath, many a stifled sob was heard. Some—and they were not a few—knelt down. All were sincere and truthful in their sorrow.

The service done, the mourners stood apart, and the villagers closed round to look into the grave before the pavement stone should be replaced. One called to mind how he had seen her sitting on that very spot, and how her book had fallen on her lap, and she was gazing with a pensive face upon the sky. Another told, how he had wondered much that one so delicate as she, should be so bold; how she had never feared to enter the church alone at night, but had loved to linger there when all was quiet; and even to climb the tower stair, with no more light than that of the moon rays stealing through the loopholes in the thick old wall. A whisper went about among the oldest there, that she had seen and talked with angels; and when they called to mind how she had looked, and spoken, and her early death, some thought it might be so, indeed. Thus, coming to the grave in little knots, and glancing down, and giving place to others, and falling off in whispering groups of three or four, the church was cleared in time of all but the sexton and the mourning friends.

They saw the vault covered and the stone fixed down. Then, when the dusk of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the sacred stillness of the place—when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all (it seemed to them) upon her quiet grave—in that calm time, when all outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them—then, with tranquil and submissive hearts they turned away, and left the child with God.

Oh! It is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty universal Truth. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets

the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it with their light. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven.

It was late when the old man came home. The boy had led him to his own dwelling, under some pretence, on their way back; and, rendered drowsy by his long ramble and late want of rest, he had sunk into a deep sleep by the fire-side. He was perfectly exhausted, and they were careful not to rouse him. The slumber held him a long time, and when he at length awoke the moon was shining.

The younger brother, uneasy at his protracted absence, was watching at the door for his coming, when he appeared in the pathway with his little guide. He advanced to meet them, and tenderly obliging the old man to lean upon his arm, conducted him with slow and trembling steps towards the house.

He repaired to her chamber, straight. Not finding what he had left there, he returned with distracted looks to the room in which they were assembled. From that, he rushed into the schoolmaster's cottage, calling her name. They followed close upon him, and when he had vainly searched it, brought him home.

With such persuasive words as pity and affection could suggest, they prevailed upon him to sit among them and hear what they should tell him. Then, endeavouring by every little artifice to prepare his mind for what must come, and dwelling with many fervent words upon the happy lot to which she had been removed, they told him, at last, the truth. The moment it had passed their lips, he fell down among them like a murdered man.

For many hours, they had little hope of his surviving; but grief is strong, and he recovered.

If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death — the weary void — the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn—the connexion between inanimate and senseless things, and the object of recollection, when every household god becomes a monument and every room a grave — if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess, how, for many days, the old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort.

Whatever power of thought or memory he retained, was all bound up in her. He never understood, or seemed to care to understand, about his brother. To every endearment and attention he continued listless. If they spoke to him on this, or any other theme — save one — he would hear them patiently for a while, then turn away, and go on seeking as before.

On that one theme, which was in his, and all their minds, it was impossible to touch. Dead! He could not bear to hear the word. The slightest hint of it would throw him into a paroxysm, like that he had had when it was first spoken. In what hope he lived, no man could tell; but that he had some hope of finding her again—some faint and shadowy hope, deferred from day to day, and making him from day to day more sick and sore at heart—was plain to all.

They bethought them of a removal from the scene of this last sorrow; trying whether change of place would rouse or cheer him. His brother sought the advice of those who were accounted skilful in such matters, and they came and saw him. Some of the number stayed upon the spot, conversed with him when he would converse, and watched him as he wandered up and down, alone and silent. Move him where they might, they said he would ever seek to get back there. His mind would run upon that spot. If they confined him closely, and kept a strict guard upon him, they might hold him prisoner, but if he could by any means escape, he would surely wander back to that place, or die upon the road.

The boy, to whom he had submitted at first, had no longer any influence with him. At times he would suffer the child to walk by his side, or would even take such notice of his presence as giving him his hand, or would stop to kiss his cheek, or pat him on the head. At other times, he would entreat him—not unkindly—to be gone, and would not brook him near. But whether alone or with this pliant friend; or with those who would have given him, at any cost or sacrifice, some consolation or some peace of mind, if haply the means could be devised; he was at all times the same —with no love or care for anything in life —a broken-hearted man.

At length they found one day that he had risen early, and, with his knapsack on his back, his staff in hand, her own straw hat, and little basket full of such things as she had been used to carry, was gone. As

they were making ready to pursue him far and wide, a schoolboy came who had seen him, but a moment before, sitting in the church—upon her grave, he said.

They hastened there, and going softly to the door, espied him in the attitude of one who waited patiently. They did not disturb him then, but kept a watch upon him all that day. When it grew quite dark, he rose and returned home, and went to bed, murmuring to himself, "She will come to-morrow!"

Upon the morrow he was there again from sunrise until night; and still at night he laid him down to rest, and muttered, "She will come to-morrow!"

And thenceforth, every day, and all day long, he waited at her grave for her. How many pictures of new journeys over pleasant country, of resting-places under the free broad sky, of rambles in the fields and woods, and paths not often trod—how many tones of that one well-remembered voice—how many glimpses of the form, the fluttering dress, the hair that waved so gaily in the wind—how many visions of what had been, and what he hoped was yet to be—rose up before him, in the old, dull, silent church! He never told them what he thought, or where he went. He would sit with them at night, pondering with a secret satisfaction, they could see, upon the flight that he and she would take before night came again; and still they would hear him whisper in his prayers, "Oh! Let her come to-morrow!"

The last time was on a genial day in spring. He did not return at the usual hour, and they went to seek him. He was lying dead upon the stone.

They laid him by the side of her whom he had loved so well; and, in the church where they had often prayed and mused, and lingered hand in hand, the child and the old man slept together.

CHAPTER THE LAST

The magic reel, which, rolling on before, has led the chronicler thus far, now slackens in its pace, and stops. It lies before the goal; the pursuit is at an end.

It remains but to dismiss the leaders of the little crowd who have borne us company upon the road, and so to close the journey.

Foremost among them, smooth Sampson Brass and Sally, arm in arm, claim our polite attention.

Mr. Sampson, then, being detained, as already has been shown, by the justice upon whom he called, and being so strongly pressed to protract his stay that he could by no means refuse, remained under his protection for a considerable time, during which the great attention of his entertainer kept him so extremely close, that he was quite lost to society, and never even went abroad for exercise saving into a small paved yard. So well, indeed, was his modest and retiring temper understood by those with whom he had to deal, and so jealous were they of his absence, that they required a kind of friendly bond to be entered into by two substantial housekeepers, in the sum of fifteen hundred pounds apiece, before they would suffer him to quit their hospitable roof—doubting, it appeared, that he would return, if once let loose, on any other terms. Mr. Brass, struck with the humour of this jest, and carrying out its spirit to the utmost, sought from his wide connexion a pair of friends whose joint possessions fell some halfpence short of fifteen pence, and proffered them as bail —for that was the merry word agreed upon on both sides. These gentlemen being rejected, after twenty-four hours' pleasantry, Mr. Brass consented to remain, and did remain, until a club of choice spirits called a Grand Jury (who were in the joke) summoned him to a trial before twelve other wags for perjury and fraud, who in their turn found him guilty with a most facetious joy, — nay, the very populace entered into the whim, and when Mr. Brass was moving in a hackney-coach towards the building where these wags assembled, saluted him with rotten eggs and carcases of kittens, and feigned to wish to tear him into shreds, which greatly increased the comicality of the thing, and made him relish it the more, no doubt.

To work this sportive vein still further, Mr. Brass, by his counsel, moved in arrest of judgment that he had been led to criminate himself, by assurances of safety and promises of pardon, and claimed the leniency which the law extends to such confiding natures as are thus deluded. After solemn argument, this point (with others of a technical nature, whose humorous extravagance it would be difficult to exaggerate) was referred to the judges for their decision, Sampson being meantime removed to his former quarters. Finally, some of the points were given in Sampson's favour, and some against him; and the upshot was, that, instead of being desired to travel for a time in foreign parts, he was permitted to grace the mother country, under certain insignificant restrictions.

These were that he should, for a term of years, reside in a spacious mansion, where several other gentlemen were lodged and boarded at the public charge who went clad in a sober uniform of grey turned up with yellow, had their hair cut extremely short, and chiefly lived on gruel and light soup. It was also required of him that he should partake their exercise of constantly ascending an endless flight of stairs; and lest his legs, unused to such exertion, should be weakened by it, that he should wear upon one ankle an amulet or charm of iron. These conditions being arranged, he was removed one evening to his new abode, and enjoyed, in common with nine other gentlemen and two ladies, the privilege of being taken to his place of retirement in one of Royalty's own carriages.

Over and above these trifling penalties, his name was erased and blotted out from the roll of attorneys; which erasure has been always held in these latter times to be a great degradation and reproach, and to imply the commission of some amazing villany — as indeed would seem to be the case, when so many worthless names remain among its better records, unmolested.

Of Sally Brass, conflicting rumours went abroad. Some said with confidence that she had gone down to the docks in male attire, and had become a female sailor; others darkly whispered that she had enlisted as a private in the second regiment of Foot Guards, and had been seen in uniform and on duty, to wit, leaning on her

musket and looking out of a sentry-box in St. James's Park, one evening. There were many such whispers as these in circulation; but the truth appears to be that, after a lapse of some five years (during which there is no direct evidence of her having been seen at all), two wretched people were more than once observed to crawl at dusk from the inmost recesses of St. Giles's, and to take their way along the streets, with shuffling steps and cowering shivering forms, looking into the roads and kennels as they went in search of refuse food or disregarded offal. These forms were never beheld but in those nights of cold and gloom, when the terrible spectres, who lie at all other times in the obscene hiding-places of London, in archways, dark vaults and cellars, venture to creep into the streets; the embodied spirits of Disease, and Vice, and Famine. It was whispered by those who should have known, that these were Sampson and his sister Sally; and to this day, it is said, they sometimes pass, on bad nights, in the same loathsome guise, close at the elbow of the shrinking passenger.

The body of Quilp being found—though not until some days had elapsed—an inquest was held on it near the spot where it had been washed ashore. The general supposition was that he had committed suicide, and, this appearing to be favoured by all the circumstances of his death, the verdict was to that effect. He was left to be buried with a stake through his heart in the centre of four lonely roads.

It was rumoured afterwards that this horrible and barbarous ceremony had been dispensed with, and that the remains had been secretly given up to Tom Scott. But even here, opinion was divided; for some said Tom had dug them up at midnight, and carried them to a place indicated to him by the widow. It is probable that both these stories may have had their origin in the simple fact of Tom's shedding tears upon the inquest—which he certainly did, extraordinary as it may appear. He manifested, besides, a strong desire to assault the jury; and being restrained and conducted out of court, darkened its only window by standing on his head upon the sill, until he was dexterously tilted upon his feet again by a cautious beadle.

Being cast upon the world by his master's death, he determined to go through it upon his head and hands, and accordingly began to tumble for his bread. Finding, however, his English birth an insurmountable obstacle to his advancement in this pursuit (notwithstanding that his art was in high repute and favour) he assumed the name of an Italian image lad, with whom he had become acquainted; and afterwards tumbled with extraordinary success, and to overflowing audiences.

Little Mrs. Quilp never quite forgave herself the one deceit that lay so heavy on her conscience, and never spoke or thought of it but with bitter tears. Her husband had no relations, and she was rich. He had made no will, or she would probably have been poor. Having married the first time at her mother's instigation, she consulted in her second choice nobody but herself. It fell upon a smart young fellow enough; and as he made it a preliminary condition that Mrs. Jiniwin should be thenceforth an out-pensioner, they lived together after marriage with no more than the average amount of quarrelling, and led a merry life upon the dead dwarf's money.

Mr. and Mrs. Garland, and Mr. Abel, went on as usual (except that there was a change in their household, as will be seen presently), and in due time the latter went into partnership with his friend the notary, on which occasion there was a dinner, and a ball, and great extent of dissipation. Unto this ball there happened to be invited the most bashful young lady that was ever seen, with whom Mr. Abel happened to fall in love. *How* it happened, or how they found it out, or which of them first communicated the discovery to the other nobody knows. But certain it is, that in course of time they were married; and equally certain it is that they were the happiest of the happy; and no less certain it is that they deserved to be so. And it is pleasant to write down that they reared a family; because any propagation of goodness and benevolence is no small addition to the aristocracy of nature, and no small subject of rejoicing for mankind at large.

The pony preserved his character for independence and principle down to the last moment of his life, which was an unusually long one, and caused him to be looked upon, indeed, as the very Old Parr of ponies. He often went to and fro with the little phaeton between Mr. Garland's and his son's, and, as the old people and the young were frequently together, had a stable of his own at the new establishment, into which he would walk of himself with surprising dignity. He condescended to play with the children, as they grew old enough to cultivate his friendship, and would run up and down the little paddock with them like a dog; but though he relaxed so far, and allowed them such small freedoms as caresses, or even to look at his shoes or hang on by his tail, he never permitted any one among them to mount his back or drive

him; thus showing that even their familiarity must have its limits, and that there were points between them far too serious for trifling.

He was not unsusceptible of warm attachments in his later life, for when the good bachelor came to live with Mr. Garland upon the clergyman's decease, he conceived a great friendship for him, and amiably submitted to be driven by his hands without the least resistance. He did no work for two or three years before he died, but lived in clover; and his last act (like a choleric old gentleman) was to kick his doctor.

Mr. Swiveller, recovering very slowly from his illness, and entering into the receipt of his annuity, bought for the Marchioness a handsome stock of clothes, and put her to school forthwith, in redemption of the vow he had made upon his fevered bed. After casting about for some time for a name which should be worthy of her, he decided in favour of Sophronia Sphynx, as being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indicative of mystery. Under this title the Marchioness repaired, in tears, to the school of his selection, from which, as she soon distanced all competitors, she was removed before the lapse of many quarters to one of a higher grade. It is but bare justice to Mr. Swiveller to say, that, although the expenses of her education kept him in straitened circumstances for half-a-dozen years, he never slackened in his zeal, and always held himself sufficiently repaid by the accounts he heard (with great gravity) of her advancement, on his monthly visits to the governess, who looked upon him as a literary gentleman of eccentric habits, and of a most prodigious talent in quotation.

In a word, Mr. Swiveller kept the Marchioness at this establishment until she was, at a moderate guess, full nineteen years of age — good-looking, clever, and good-humoured; when he began to consider seriously what was to be done next. On one of his periodical visits, while he was revolving this question in his mind, the Marchioness came down to him, alone, looking more smiling and more fresh than ever. Then it occurred to him, but not for the first time, that if she would marry him, how comfortable they might be! So Richard asked her; whatever she said, it wasn't no; and they were married in good earnest that day week, which gave Mr. Swiveller frequent occasion to remark at divers subsequent periods that there had been a young lady saving up for him after all.

A little cottage at Hampstead being to let, which had in its garden a smoking-box, the envy of the civilised world, they agreed to become its tenants; and when the honeymoon was over, entered upon its occupation. To this retreat Mr. Chuckster repaired regularly every Sunday to spend the day—usually beginning with breakfast; and here he was the great purveyor of general news and fashionable intelligence. For some years he continued a deadly foe to Kit, protesting that he had a better opinion of him when he was supposed to have stolen the five-pound note, than when he was shown to be perfectly free of the crime; inasmuch as his guilt would have had in it something daring and bold, whereas his innocence was but another proof of a sneaking and crafty disposition. By slow degrees, however, he was reconciled to him in the end; and even went so far as to honour him with his patronage, as one who had in some measure reformed, and was therefore to be forgiven. But he never forgot or pardoned that circumstance of the shilling; holding that if he had come back to get another he would have done well enough, but that his returning to work out the former gift was a stain upon his moral character which no penitence or contrition could ever wash away.

Mr. Swiveller, having always been in some measure of a philosophic and reflective turn, grew immensely contemplative, at times, in the smoking-box, and was accustomed at such periods to debate in his own mind the mysterious question of Sophronia's parentage. Sophronia herself supposed she was an orphan; but Mr. Swiveller, putting various slight circumstances together, often thought Miss Brass must know better than that; and, having heard from his wife of her strange interview with Quilp, entertained sundry misgivings whether that person, in his lifetime, might not also have been able to solve the riddle, had he chosen. These speculations, however, gave him no uneasiness; for Sophronia was ever a most cheerful, affectionate, and provident wife to him; and Dick (excepting for an occasional outbreak with Mr. Chuckster, which she had the good sense rather to encourage than oppose) was to her an attached and domesticated husband. And they played many hundred thousand games of cribbage together. And let it be added, to Dick's honour, that though we have called her Sophronia, he called her the Marchioness from first to last; and that upon every anniversary of the day on which he found her in his sick room, Mr. Chuckster came to dinner, and there was great glorification.

The gamblers, Isaac List and Jowl, with their trusty confederate Mr. James Groves of unimpeachable memory pursued their

course with varying success, until the failure of a spirited enterprise in the way of their profession, dispersed them in different directions, and caused their career to receive a sudden check from the long and strong arm of the law. This defeat had its origin in the untoward detection of a new associate — young Frederick Trent — who thus became the unconscious instrument of their punishment and his own.

For the young man himself, he rioted abroad for a brief term, living by his wits—which means by the abuse of every faculty that worthily employed raises man above the beasts, and so degraded, sinks him far below them. It was not long before his body was recognized by a stranger, who chanced to visit that hospital in Paris where the drowned are laid out to be owned; despite the bruises and disfigurements which were said to have been occasioned by some previous scuffle. But the stranger kept his own counsel until he returned home, and it was never claimed or cared for.

The younger brother, or the single gentleman, for that designation is more familiar, would have drawn the poor schoolmaster from his lone retreat, and made him his companion and friend. But the humble village teacher was timid of venturing into the noisy world, and had become fond of his dwelling in the old church-yard. Calmly happy in his school, and in the spot, and in the attachment of Her little mourner, he pursued his quiet course in peace; and was, through the righteous gratitude of his friend — let this brief mention suffice for that — a *poor* schoolmaster no more.

That friend — single gentleman, or younger brother, which you will — had at his heart a heavy sorrow; but it bred in him no misanthropy or monastic gloom. He went forth into the world, a lover of his kind. For a long, long time, it was his chief delight to travel in the steps of the old man and the child, (so far as he could trace them from her last narrative), to halt where they had halted, sympathise where they had suffered, and rejoice where they had been made glad. Those who had been kind to them, did not escape his search. The sisters at the school — they who were her friends, because themselves so friendless— Mrs. Jarley of the wax-work, Codlin, Short —he found them all; and trust me that the man who fed the furnace fire was not forgotten

Kit's story having got abroad, raised him up a host of friends, and many offers of provision for his future life. He had no idea at first of ever quitting Mr. Garland's service; but, after serious remonstrance and advice from that gentleman, began to contemplate the possibility of such a change being brought about in time. A good post was procured for him, with a rapidity which took away his breath, by some of the gentlemen who had believed him guilty of the offence laid to his charge, and who had acted upon that belief. Through the same kind agency, his mother was secured from want, and made quite happy. Thus, as Kit often said, his great misfortune turned out to be the source of all his subsequent prosperity.

Did Kit live a single man all his days, or did he marry? Of course he married, and who should be his wife but Barbara! And the best of it was, he married so soon that little Jacob was an uncle, before the calves of his legs, already mentioned in this history, had ever been encased in broadcloth pantaloons,— though that was not quite the best either, for of necessity the baby was an uncle too. The delight of Kit's mother and of Barbara's mother upon the great occasion is past all telling; finding they agreed so well on that, and on all other subjects, they took up their abode together, and were a most harmonious pair of friends from that time forth. And hadn't Astley's cause to bless itself for their all going together once a quarter—to the pit —and didn't Kit's mother always say, when they painted the outside, that Kit's last treat had helped to that, and wonder what the manager would feel if he but knew it as they passed his house!

When Kit had children six and seven years old, there was a Barbara among them, and a pretty Barbara she was. Nor was there wanting an exact facsimile and copy of little Jacob as he appeared in those remote times when they taught him what oysters meant. Of course there was an Abel, own godson to the Mr. Garland of that name; and there was a Dick, whom Mr. Swiveller did especially favour. The little group would often gather round him of a night and beg him to tell again that story of good Miss Nell who died. This Kit would do; and when they cried to hear it, wishing it longer too, he would teach them how she had gone to Heaven, as all good people did; and how, if they were good like her, they might hope to be there too one day, and to see and know her as he had done when he was quite a boy. Then he would relate to them how needy he used to be, and how she had taught him what he was otherwise too poor to learn, and how the old man had been used to say "she always laughs at Kit;" at which they would brush away their tears, and laugh themselves to think that she had done so, and be again quite merry.

He sometimes took them to the street where she had lived; but new improvements had altered it so much, it was not like the same. The old house had been long ago pulled down, and a fine broad road was in its place. At first he would draw with his stick a square upon the ground to show them where it used to stand. But he soon became uncertain of the spot, and could only say it was thereabouts, he thought, and that these alterations were confusing.

Such are the changes which a few years bring about, and so do things pass away, like a tale that is told!

END OF "THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP."

MASTER HUMPHREY FROM HIS CLOCK SIDE IN THE CHIMNEY-CORNER

I WAS musing the other evening upon the characters and incidents with which I had been so long engaged; wondering how I could ever have looked forward with pleasure to the completion of my tale, and reproaching myself for having done so, as if it were a kind of cruelty to those companions of my solitude whom I had now dismissed, and could never again recall; when my clock struck ten. Punctual to the hour, my friends appeared.

On our last night of meeting, we had nished the story which the reader has just oncluded. Our conversation took the same crrent as the meditations which the entnce of my friends had interrupted, and the Old Curiosity Shop was the staple of our discourse.

I may confide to the reader now, that in connexion with this little history I had something upon my mind—something to communicate which I had all along with difficulty repressed—something I had deemed it, during the progress of the story, necessary to its interest to disguise, and which now that it was over, I wished, and was yet reluctant, to disclose.

To conceal anything from those to whom I am attached, is not in my nature. I can never close my lips where I have opened my heart. This temper and the consciousness of having done some violence to it in

my narrative, laid me under a restraint which I should have had great difficulty in overcoming, but for a timely remark from Mr. Miles, who, as I hinted in a former paper, is a gentleman of business habits, and of great exactness and propriety in all his transactions.

"I could have wished," my friend objected; "that we had been made acquainted with the single gentleman's name. I don't like his withholding his name. It made me look upon him at first with suspicion, and caused me to doubt his moral character, I assure you. I am fully satisfied by this time of his being a worthy creature, but in this respect he certainly would not appear to have acted at all like a man of business."

"My friends," said I, drawing to the table at which they were by this time seated in their usual chairs, "do you remember that this story bore another title besides that one we have so often heard of late?"

Mr. Miles had his pocket-book out in an instant, and referring to an entry therein, rejoined "Certainly. Personal adventures of Master Humphrey. Here it is. I made a note of it at the time."

I was about to resume what I had to tell them, when the same Mr. Miles again interrupted me, observing that the narrative originated in a personal adventure of my own, and that was no doubt the reason for its being thus designated.

This led me to the point at once.

"You will one and all forgive me," I returned, "if, for the greater convenience of the story, and for its better introduction, that adventure was fictitious. I had my share indeed — no light or trivial one — in the pages we have read, but it was not the share I feigned to have at first. The younger brother, the single gentleman, the nameless actor in this little drama, stands before you now."

It was easy to see they had not expected this disclosure.

"Yes," I pursued, "I can look back upon my part in it with a calm, half-smiling pity for myself as for some other man. But I am he indeed; and now the chief sorrows of my life are yours."

I need not say what true gratification I derived from the sympathy and kindness with which this acknowledgment was received; nor how often it had risen to my lips before; nor how difficult I had found it —how impossible, when I came to those passages which touched me most, and most nearly concerned me—to sustain the character I had assumed. It is enough to say that I replaced in the clock-case the record of so many trials— sorrowfully, it is true, but with a softened sorrow which was almost pleasure; and felt that in living through the past again, and communicating to others the lesson it had helped to teach me, I had been a happier man.

We lingered so long over the leaves from which I had read, that as I consigned them to their former resting-place, the hand of my trusty clock pointed to twelve, and there came towards us upon the wind the voice of the deep and distant bell of St. Paul's as it struck the hour of midnight.

"This," said I, returning with a manuscript I had taken, at the moment, from the same repository, "to be opened to such music, should be a tale where London's face by night is darkly seen, and where some deed of such a time as this is dimly shadowed out. Which of us here has seen the working of that great machine whose voice has just now ceased?"

Mr. Pickwick had, of course, and so had Mr. Miles. Jack and my deaf friend were in the minority.

I had seen it but a few days before, and could not help telling them of the fancy I had had about it.

I paid my fee of twopence upon entering, to one of the money-changers who sit within the Temple; and falling, after a few turns up and down, into the quiet train of thought which such a place awakens, paced the echoing stones like some old monk whose present world lay all within its walls. As I looked afar up into the lofty dome, I could not help wondering what were his reflections whose genius reared that mighty pile, when, the last small wedge of timber fixed, the last nail driven into its home for many centuries, the clang of hammers, and the hum of busy voices gone, and the Great Silence whole years of noise had helped to make, reigning undisturbed around, he mused as I did now, upon his work, and lost himself amid its vast extent. I could not quite determine whether the contemplation of it would impress him with a sense of greatness or of insignificance; but when I remembered how long a time it had taken to erect, in how short a space it might be traversed even to its remotest parts, for how brief a term he, or any of those who cared to bear his name, would live to see it, or know of its existence, I imagined him far more melancholy than proud, and looking with regret upon his labour done. With these thoughts in my mind, I began to ascend, almost unconsciously, the flight of steps leading to the several wonders of the building, and found myself before a barrie where another money-taker sat, who de manded which among them I would choo to see. There were the stone-gallery, t

said, and the whispering gallery, the geometrical staircase, the room of models, the clock—the clock being quite in my way, I stopped him there, and chose that sight from all the rest.

I groped my way into the Turret which it occupies, and saw before me, in a kind of loft, what seemed to be a great, old, oaken press with folding doors. These being thrown back by the attendant (who was sleeping when I came upon him, and looked a drowsy fellow, as though his close companionship with Time had made him quite indifferent to it) disclosed a complicated crowd of wheels and chains in iron and brass—great, sturdy, rattling engines —suggestive of breaking a finger put in here or there, and grinding the bone to powder—and these were the Clock! Its very pulse, if I may use the word, was like no other clock. It did not mark the flight of every moment with a gentle second stroke as though it would check old Time, and have him stay his pace in pity, but measured it with one sledge-hammer beat, as if its business were to crush the seconds as they came trooping on, and remorselessly to clear a path before the Day of Judgment.

I sat down opposite it, and hearing its regular and never-changing voice, that one deep constant note, uppermost amongst all the noise and clatter in the streets below —marking that let that tumult rise or fall, go on or stop—let it be night or noon, tomorrow or to-day, this year or next—it still performed its functions with the same dull constancy, and regulated the progress of the life around, the fancy came upon me that this was London's Heart, and that when it should cease to beat, the City would be no more.

It is night. Calm and unmoved amidst the scenes that darkness favours, the great heart of London throbs in its Giant breast. Wealth and beggary, vice and virtue, guilt and innocence, repletion and the direst hunger, all treading on each other and crowding together, are gathered round it. Draw but a little circle above the clustering house-tops, and you shall have within its space, everything with its opposite extreme and contradiction, close beside. Where yonder feeble light is shining, a man is but this moment dead. The taper, at a few yards distance, is seen by eyes that have this instant opened on the world. There are two houses separated by but an inch or two of wall. In one, there are quiet minds at rest; in the other a waking conscience that one might think would trouble the very air. In that close corner where the roofs shrink down and cower together as if to hide their secrets from the handsome street hard by, there are such dark crimes, such miseries and horrors, as could be hardly told in whispers. In the handsome street, there are folks asleep who have dwelt there all their lives, and have no more knowledge of these things than if they had never been, or were transacted at the remotest limits of the world—who, if they were hinted at, would shake their heads, look wise, and frown, and say they were impossible, and out of Nature—as if all great towns were not. Does not this Heart of London, that nothing moves, nor stops, nor quickens—that goes on the same, let what will be done—does it not express the city's character well?

The day begins to break, and soon there is the hum and noise of life. Those who have spent the night on door-steps and cold stones, crawl off to beg; they who have slept in beds, come forth to their occupation too, and business is astir. The fog of sleep rolls slowly off, and London shines awake. The streets are filled with carriages, and people gaily clad. The jails are full, too, to the throat, nor have the workhouses or hospitals much room to spare. The courts of law are crowded. Taverns have their regular frequenters by this time, and every mart of traffic has its throng. Each of these places is a world, and has its own inhabitants; each is distinct from, and almost unconscious of the existence of any other. There are some few people well tc do, who remember to have heard it said, that numbers of men and women — thousands they think it was—get up in London every day, unknowing where to lay their heads at night; and that there are quarters of the town where misery and famine al ways are. They don't believe it qu te — there may be some truth in it, but it is exaggerated of course. So each of these thousand worlds goes on, intent upon itself, until night comes again — first with its lights and pleasures, and its cheerful streets; then with its guilt and darkness.

Heart of London, there is a moral in thy every stroke! as I look on at thy indomitable working, which neither death, nor press of life, nor grief, nor gladness out of doors will influence one jot, I seem to hear a voice within thee which sinks into my heart, bidding me, as I elbow my way among the crowd, have some thought for the meanest wretch that passes, and, being a man, to turn away with scorn and pride from none that bear the human shape.

I am by no means sure that I might not have been tempted to enlarge upon this subject, had not the papers that lay before me on the table, been a silent reproach for even this digression. I took them up again

when I had got thus far, and seriously prepared to read.

The handwriting was strange to me, for the manuscript had been fairly copied. As it is against our rules in such a case to inquire into the authorship until the reading is concluded, I could only glance at the different faces round me, in search of some expression which should betray the writer. Whoever he might be, he was prepared for this, and gave no sign for my enlightenment.

I had the papers in my hand, when my deaf friend interposed with a suggestion.

"It has occurred to me," he said, "bearing in mind your sequel to the tale we have finished, that if such of us as have anything to relate of our own lives, could interweave it with our contribution to the Clock, it would be well to do so. This need be no restraint upon us, either as to time, or place, or incident, since any real passage of this kind may be surrounded by fictitious circumstances, and represented by fictitious characters. What if we made this, an article of agreement among ourselves?"

The proposition was cordially received, but the difficulty appeared to be that here was a long story written before we had thought of it.

"Unless," said I, "it should have happened that the writer of this tale — which is not impossible, for men are apt to do so when they write — has actually mingled with it something of his own endurance and experience."

Nobody spoke, but I thought I detected in one quarter that this was really the case.

"If I have no assurance to the contrary," I added therefore, "I shall take it for granted that he has done so, and that even these papers come within our new agreement. Everybody being mute, we hold that understanding if you please."

And here I was about to begin again, when Jack informed us softly, that during the progress of our last narrative, Mr. Weller's watch had adjourned its sittings from the kitchen, and regularly met outside our door, where he had no doubt that august body would be found at the present moment. As this was for the convenience of listening to our stories, he submitted that they might be suffered to come in, and hear them more pleasantly.

To this we one and all yielded a ready assent, and the party being discovered, as Jack had supposed, and invited to walk in, entered (though not without great confusion at having been detected) and were accommodated with chairs at a little distance.

Then, the lamp being trimmed, the fire well stirred and burning brightly, the hearth clean swept, the curtains closely drawn, the clock wound up, we entered on our new story, BARNABY RUDGE.

THE END.

THE

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OR, THE

Adventures of a Lady in Search of a Good Servant.

BY ONE

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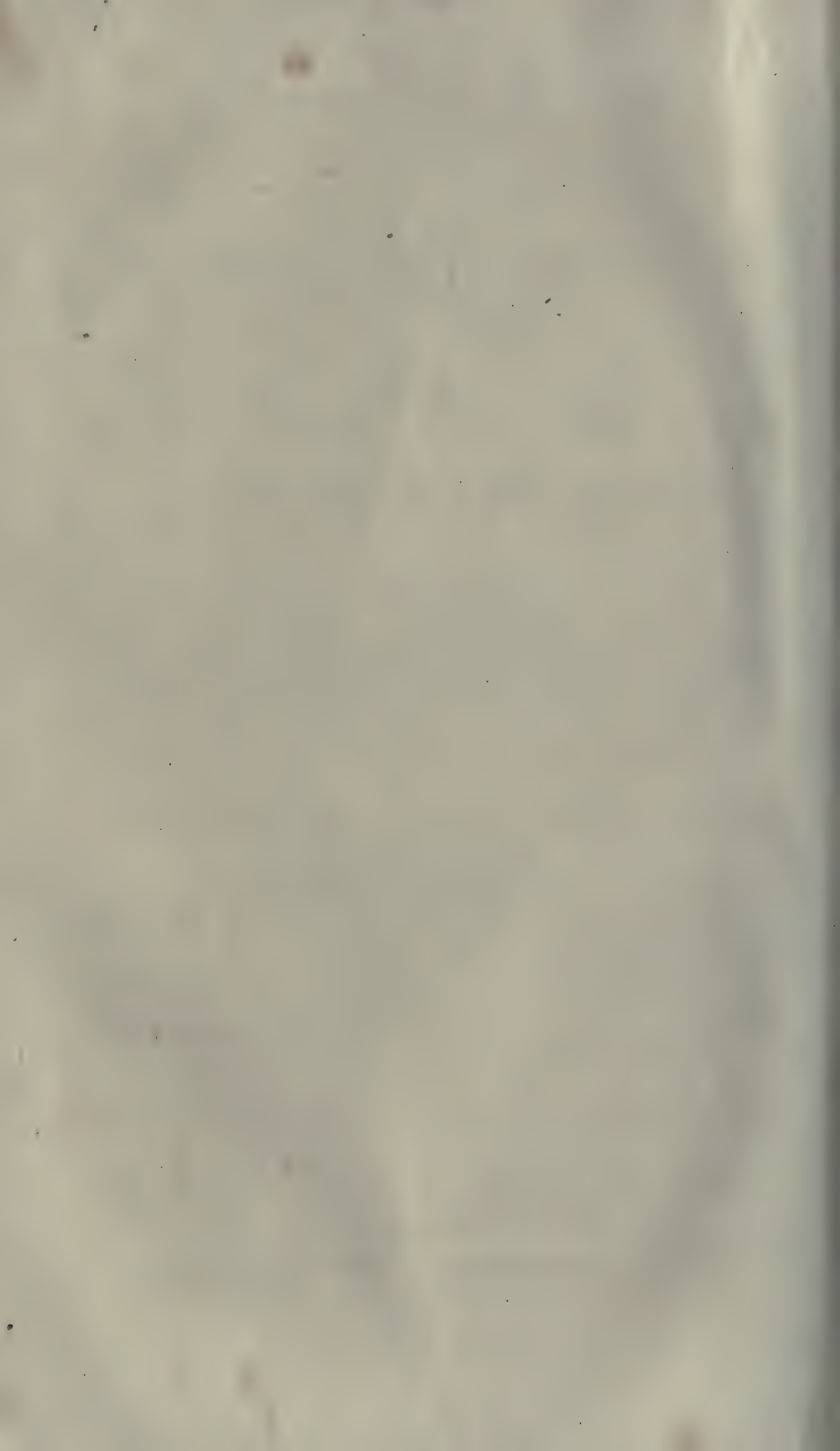

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THE

GREATEST PLAGUE OF LIFE;

OR,

The Adventures

OF

A LADY IN SEARCH OF A GOOD SERVANT.

INTRODUCTION.

HOW I BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE SUBJECT OF MY LITTLE BOOK

"Is there a heart that never loved,
Or felt soft Woman's sigh?
Is there a man can mark unmoved
Dear Woman's tearful eye?
Oh, bear him to some distant shore,
Or solitary cell:
Where none but savage monsters roar,
Where love ne'er deigned to dwell."
POPULAR BALLAD.

It has been as wisely as beautifully remarked by the Rev. Robert Montgomery, in his delightfully truthful and sweet pretty Poem, entitled "Woman an Angel!" that the lovely daughters of Eve (I quote from memory, giving rather the sentiment than the words of that talented and elegant divine), were born to suffer; for not only have they their own severe afflictions to put up with, but they are expected also to become willing partners in those of the sons of Adam by whom they have been led to the altar, and whose hands and fortunes they have consented to accept and share. Without lovely Woman to soothe, restrain, and look after them, I should like to know what would be the fate of those impatient, obstinate, selfish, and poor helpless creatures—Men? Would they not unpick every social tie? and go about like the brutes of the fields, with scarcely a thing fit to put on, and their stockings all full of holes—a prey to their all-devouring appetites—the slaves of their ungovernable passions, and be robbed right and left by their servants? And why, I ask, would this be the case?—why, because every Woman, with her proper feelings about her, knows as well as I do that it certainly would.

The immortal Swan of Avon has somewhere charmingly said—

"Give me that man who is not passion's slave,
And I will wear him in my heart of hearts;"

and if such a being was ever created, I certainly must say that I should not hesitate to follow so worthy an example as that of the immortal Swan,—that is, indeed, were I not a married woman.

Yes, lovely daughters of Eve! ours is a horrid, bitter cup. To us the Earth is truly a Vale of Tears, without e'en one pretty flower growing up among the shoals and quicksands that beset our briery path, to gladden us on our way. Indeed, the trials of us, poor, dear, confiding Women form a sad—sad history; and, Goodness knows! that the humble individual who is now addressing the courteous Reader has had her share of worldly troubles to bear up against. What I have suffered in my time few would believe, and none but myself can tell. In fact, if I had not had a very fine constitution of my own, my frame must have given way under it,—for I am sure the heart-rending ordeals that I have been condemned to go through with—in a word, the overwhelming——but more of this hereafter.

It was a cold Autumnal midnight, and the wind was blowing frightfully, and the rain was beating against the windows, and not a sound was to be heard in the streets, unless I mention the noise of some two or three cabs tearing past the house,

and bearing homewards their gay and youthful votaries of fashion from some festive ball or joyous theatre. Indeed, it was just such a night as makes the sympathizing heart of Woman, when seated quietly by her own comfortable fire-side, bleed with pity to think of the poor houseless wanderer, who is obliged to pace the streets without e'en so much as a shoe to his feet, or anything to live upon. I was sitting up-stairs, in my snug little bed-room, my thoughts fixed only on Edward's (that is, my husband's) return; for having a heavy cause which stood for trial in the Exchequer on the morrow, he was, I knew, detained at his Chambers, in L—nc—n's I—n, on important business.

I always made it a rule, even when I had an establishment of my own, (why I have not one now, the reader shall learn by-and-by,) of sitting up for Edward myself, in preference to letting the servants do so. For, in the first place, we never dine until six o'clock, although I am naturally a small eater; and, secondly, it is unreasonable to expect that, if the servants are kept up over night, they can be down stairs in the morning, in time to get through with their next day's work; and, thirdly, I have always found Edward come home much earlier when he knew that I was staying up for him, instead of the maid.

I was then, as I said before, sitting up for my husband; and, to pass the time, I was unpicking my green silk pelisse, with the view of making it into a couple of best frocks for my sweet little pets, Kate and Annie (my two dear good girls); and as I had worn it, I should think, not more than one or two winters altogether, and it was getting to look quite old-fashioned, I thought it would be better to make it up for my darling girls, and try and prevail upon dear Edward to buy me a new one next time we went out for a walk together.

So, as I said before, I was sitting up for my husband, and whilst I was busy at work, I could not help contrasting my then new situation in life (I had been in the house only one day,—but more of this hereafter), with the domestic comfort I once thought I should have enjoyed. "Here am I," (I said to myself,) "closely connected with one of the oldest families in the kingdom,—the wife of a highly respectable professional man,—the mother of five strong and (thank Heaven!) healthy children,—and three of whom are boys, and the other two girls,—without an establishment that I can call my own,—positively driven from my home,—obliged to sell my elegant furniture at a sacrifice of five hundred and eighty pounds and odd,—glad to take refuge in the venal hospitality of a boarding house!! in G—ldf—rd St—t, R—ss—ll Sq—re, near the F—ndl—ng H—sp—t—l, and at the mercy of a set of people that one really knows little or nothing about. And why is this?—alas! why? Why, because we were obliged to leave our own house, and all through a pack of ungrateful, good-for-nothing things called servants, who really do not know when they are well off.

Ever since we first commenced housekeeping, I cannot say the creatures have let me know one day's perfect peace. A more indulgent master and mistress I am sure they never could have had. For myself, if they had been my own children I could not have looked after them more than I did—continually instructing them, and even sometimes condescending to do part of their work for them myself, out of mere kindness, just to show them how; and never allowing a set of fellows from those dreadful barracks in Alb—ny Str—t to come running after them, turning the heads of the poor ignorant things, and trifling with their affections, and borrowing their wages, and living upon me. And yet the only return the minxes made me was to fly in my face directly my back was turned, and to drive me nearly mad; so that at times I have been in that state of mind that I really did not know whether I was standing on my head or my heels. For what with their breakages—and their impudence—and their quarrelling among themselves—and their followers—and their dirt and filth—and their turning up their noses at the best of food—and their wilful waste and goings on—and their neglect and ill treatment of the dear children—and their pilferings—and their pride, their airs, and ill tempers—and those horrid soldiers—(but more of this hereafter)—I'm sure it was enough to turn the head of ten Christians. But I do verily believe that both my body and mind were giving way under it; and, indeed, our medical adviser, Mr. J——pp, (as I afterwards learnt,) told Edward as much, and that if he did not get me away, he wouldn't answer for the consequences; adding, that it was only the very fine constitution I had of my own that had kept me alive under it all So that when Edward communicated to me what our medical adviser

nad said, and proposed that we should break up our establishment, and retire to a boarding-house, where at least we might enjoy peace and quiet, I told him that I had long felt (though I never liked to confess as much to him) that my domestic cares had been making inroads upon my health and constitution that I never could restore, and that I would gladly give my consent to any course that he thought might add to his comfort; that all my anxiety had been to protect his property, and prevent his furniture from going to rack and ruin before my very eyes, but that if he wished to part with it, I would not stand in the way; for, to tell the truth, I was sick and tired of house-keeping and servants, and only too glad to wash my hands of them altogether.

And now that they have driven me and my husband to seek an asylum in a respectable boarding-house, (and where, thank goodness! I have nothing at all to do with the creatures, or the furniture—for as the things about one are not one's own, why, of course it's no matter to me whether they're broken to bits or not; and it isn't likely, indeed, that I should be quite such a stupid as to go putting myself out of the way about another person's property,) I suppose I shall be allowed to taste a little peace, and quiet, and comfort, for the first time since my marriage. For, indeed, such has been, as I said before, my wear and tear, both of mind and body, that, though Edward and I have been married scarcely fourteen summers, I'm sure that if my courteous readers could only see me, they would take me to be at least ten years older than I really am—which I am not.

As I was saying, then, these thoughts floated through my mind the second night after we had entered our new abode, and I inwardly wished to myself that I had my time to come over again—when suddenly!—all of an instant!—a brilliant idea rushed across my brain. It was a noble idea!—one that would have done honour to any of our great philanthropists, or even Mrs. Ellis herself. And, yet, was I capable of doing justice to the idea? Alas! I feared not. Then, would it not be rashness to attempt it? Alas! I feared it would. Still, it had so benevolent an object, that I should be ten times worse than a blind heathen to shrink from it. But, even if I decided upon entertaining the idea, how was I, weak, timid, and bashful as I was, (I have always been of a retiring disposition ever since I was a child,) ever to be able to carry it out? It seemed to be madness to think any more of the idea. It might all come to Edward's ears, and he would chide his dear, foolish Caroline (that is, myself) for undertaking it. Yet I might be the proud means of saving hundreds of my fellow-creatures, who have unfortunately got weak constitutions of their own, from suffering as I have.

And when I thought of this, I no longer hesitated, but determined to publish to the world all my long experience with servants of all kinds, and countries, and colours, so that I might, as it were, become the pilot of young wives, to steer their fragile little barks through the rocks and precipices of domestic life, and prevent their happiness being wrecked as mine has been—I may say, at my own fire-side—and their household gods turned neck and crop into the streets, to wander to and fro, without so much as a place to put their heads in.

But how was all this to be done? Who was to help me in bringing this charitable work before the world? At length I remembered having bought some books of a publisher in Fleet-street, who had been, on two or three occasions, very polite to me. To him I would go in the morning, and get him to assist me in my noble undertaking. I did so. But the courteous reader shall learn what transpired in another chapter.

INTRODUCTION II.

HOW I BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE PUBLISHER OF MY LITTLE BOOK.

> "We met: 'twas in a crowd,
> And I thought he would shun me!
> He came: I could not breathe,
> For his eyes were upon me.
> He spoke: his words were cold;
> And his smile was unalter'd."
> "We Met."—Haynes Bayly.

The next morning, as soon as ever breakfast was over, and Edward had gone down to his office in L—nc—n's I—n, I retired from the public sitting-room, to

my *private* bed-room; and as it was a fine morning, and would be the first time that I had ever spoken to Mr. B——e on business, I thought it would be better to put on my best bonnet (a black velvet one, with a black bird of Paradise in it), which I had worn as yet only on Sundays, at church; and having done so, I made the best of my way towards Fleet-street.

When I reached the door of the shop, I really had scarcely courage to turn the handle; I had often heard of the nervousness of Genius, but never before had experienced the feeling myself. I'm sure, I felt as if my heart were in my mouth; and anybody that had wished, might have knocked me down with a feather. So, to bring myself round, I looked at some of the sweet, pretty engravings in the front of the shop; and having just passed my handkerchief over my face, and arranged my bonnet and hair as well as I could, in the plate-glass windows, I at last summoned up strength to enter.

Standing by the fire, in the shop, was a good-looking young man, of a dark complexion, and dressed in a tail-coat, who advanced towards me as I entered. "Mr. B——e, I presume," I said, addressing him, with an amiable smile.

"In the next room, if you please, ma'm," he replied, in a tone of becoming diffidence.

"Thank you," I replied, with a lady-like curtsey, and immediately stepped into the room alluded to.

He was engaged in packing some elegantly bound books, and was a tall, thin, young man, in a surtout, with not much colour in his face, which was, nevertheless, full of meaning. As soon as I had caught his eye—(which was a black one,)—I said in a graceful manner, "I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. B——e."

"In the next room, if you please, ma'm," he replied, with charming respect.

"You are extremely good," I answered, curtseying, as before; and passing on into the adjoining apartment, which was a counting-house. There I observed a young man, with a Grecian nose, and grey Irish eyes, and a buff kerseymere waistcoat, seated at a desk, very busy.

"Mr. B——e, if I'm not mistaken?" I asked, in an attractive, bland voice.

He looked up and answered, evidently moved by my manner, "That is Mr. B——e, ma'm;" and he pointed to a gentleman, of prepossessing exterior, who was seated on the opposite side of the desk, with his thoughts evidently wrapt up in a brown paper parcel (probably the manuscript of some popular author) he was undoing.

I advanced towards him, and found him to be a man looking very young considering all he must have upon his shoulders. As he walked across the room to meet me, he appeared to run about upon five feet and three-quarters, being neither tall nor short. He has got my eldest girl's hair, and my second boy's eyes, (the one being gold-coloured, and the other blue.) He was dressed in an invisible green surtout, with a black velvet collar, and seems to be naturally of a retiring disposition, like myself; and, as far as I can judge, from appearances, I should think he has a very fine constitution of his own. I do not know whether he is a family man, but I must say, that he certainly does appear to be a gentleman of very good breeding. And, though his diffidence makes his manner, at first, appear grave, still he seems to be naturally of a cheerful disposition; for, do what he could, it was impossible for him to prevent his inward man from peeping out of his expressive eyes.

"Mr. B——e, I presume," I first began, in my quiet, lady-like way.

"Yes, ma'm," he answered with a bland smile: "will you take a chair by the fire?"

"Thank you; you are very kind," I answered, arranging my dress as I sat down. As he said nothing further, and evidently expected me to open the business, I at length, after a short pause, summoned courage to break the ice, and remarked—"It is a very fine day, Mr. B——e."

Mr. B——e was of the same opinion, and replied—"It is, ma'm, very fine."

There was another pause, which made me feel (to use an expressive figure of speech) far from at-home, and wholly drove out of my mind the charming little address that, on my road, I had arranged, as an elegant introduction to the business.

At length, however, having cleared my throat, I began—"I have come to see

you, Mr. B——e, about publishing a little book I am determined to write. The subject of it relates principally to the great plague occasioned by servants. And, when we reflect, Mr. B——e," I continued, recollecting a portion of the speech I had prepared, "how much of our happiness depends upon those persons, and that there is no work of the kind designed to pilot the tender young wife when first launched into the sea of domestic life, through the rocks and precipices that beset her briery path——"

"Perhaps," he delicately interrupted me, "you are not acquainted, ma'm, with Dean Swift's celebrated work on the subject."

"No, Mr. B——e," I answered, with a pleasing smile; "I am not acquainted with Mr. Dean Swift's book; but, as he never could have had the experience of a wife, and a mother, of such long standing as myself, I am satisfied that it will not, in any way, clash with the one I purpose. Besides, no one, I am sure, Mr. B——e, can have suffered a millionth part of what I have, from servants; for, what with the worry, and vexation, and trouble that they have caused me, together with, I may say, the wear and tear of both mind and body, it's really, Mr. B——e, a wonder that I'm here now. Indeed, as our medical adviser says, if I hadn't had a very fine constitution of my own, I should never have been able to have gone through with it all. So that I think, Mr. B——e, my troubles would make a very interesting and instructive little book."

"Yes, ma'm," he answered, hesitatingly; "but I am sorry to say, domestic troubles don't go off at all in the trade; the public seem to have lost all taste for them. Now, if you could work up any horrible fact, or make a heroine out of some lady poisoner, ma'm, I think that might do. Sir Edward's book has been quite a hit, and there is a great demand with us for lady poisoners just now."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. B——e," I answered; "but there will be some most dreadful facts in my little book. Now, there was our Footman, who stole the spoons; and an Irish Cook, who I really thought would have been the death of the whole family. I intend to give the disclosure of all the circumstances in my interesting little work. Do you think that would do, Mr. B——e?"

"Yes, ma'm," he answered: "but I'm afraid the book, although I've no doubt (he was kind enough to add) it would be exceedingly interesting, wouldn't exactly suit me. I should not like to risk it."

"Oh! I perceive, now, Mr. B——e," I returned, as, with my customary sagacity, I at once saw the reason of his refusal. "My motives for publishing my interesting little work are dictated purely by benevolence, I can assure you. I hope you do not imagine I am one of the people who write for money. No, Mr. B——e; I am happy to say, I am not yet necessitated to fly to my pen as a means of support."

The worthy gentleman seemed pleased with the nobility of my disposition; and after a long talk I had with him, in which I explained to him all I intended to do, he was so kind as to say that he thought a good deal might be made out of the subject. So that I had the proud satisfaction of finding that I had not used my abilities in vain, for he at last, in a most gentlemanly way, not only consented to publish my interesting little work for me, but was also good enough to suggest that it should be illustrated; and actually was so polite as to give me a letter to that highly-talented artist, Mr. George Cruikshank, though I told him that I was afraid he would be too funny for a work of so serious a character. But he quelled all my doubts, by telling me that Mr. Cruikshank was a man of such versatile genius, that he was sure that the drawings from his intellectual pencil would be quite in keeping with the book; so, taking the letter of introduction, I left Mr. B——e, (my publisher,) quite charmed with the conquest I had made.

Moral reflection after writing the above.—It has been very truly remarked, by the greatest philosophers of our time, and it is likewise my opinion, that London is the finest city in this transitory world. But I cannot help observing, that Fleet-street, as it stands at present, is a crying evil, and a perfect disgrace to it. Is it not wonderful, that in these enlightened times, so little attention should be paid to the feelings of fair woman, at the crossings of this great metropolis? Englishmen, ever since charming Raleigh took his cloak off his very back, to prevent sweet Elizabeth soiling her lovely feet, have been acknowledged to be a highly polite and intellectual nation; but the way in which I was jostled and hustled,

and pushed about, by a set of low London barbarians, who once or twice knocked my beautiful best black velvet bonnet nearly off my head, makes me fear that we are all going backwards, (if I might be allowed the expression,) and that our boasted civilization is only a golden dream and a fib. What the Lord Mayor can be about, at the crossings in the city, I am at a loss to say. As they are at present regulated, it seems to me as if the civic authorities were all asleep at their posts. Three times did I attempt to get across the street, from Mr. B——'s, and three times was I driven back by the bears who are permitted to drive the omnibusses and cabs of the first city in Europe. Though the fellows saw my distress, they never once offered to stop and make way for a lone unprotected female, but only seemed to take a savage delight in my alarms. And even when I did get across, I'm sure it was at the peril of my very life. It's only a wonder to me that I didn't go into hysterics in the middle of the road; and however people, who have weak constitutions of their own, can manage to get over it, is an inscrutable mystery to me.

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INTRODUCTION III.

HOW I BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE ARTIST TO MY LITTLE BOOK.

> "He shook! 'twas but an instant,
> For speedily the pride
> Ran crimson to his heart,
> Till all chances he defied:
> It threw boldness on his forehead;
> Gave firmness to his breath;
> And he stood like some grim Warrior,
> New risen up from death."
>
> BARRY CORNWALL, (*The Admiral.*)

WHAT heartfelt joy it imparts to find a gentleman willing to lend a helping hand to the ideas of the good, and assist a virtuous female in distress. And how true and poetic it was of the Greeks to make Charity a woman; for does not charity begin at home, and does not the proud empire of lovely woman begin there also? And would not every respectable female be overflowing with goodness were it not for the harsh sway of the fell tyrant Man, who, with a heavy hand, alas! too often skims their milk of human kindness, and takes all the cream off the best feelings of their nature.

When I reached Mr. Cruikshank's door, though it was the first time I had ever the pleasure of visiting that great person, still, from the beautiful appearance that the threshold of his establishment presented, I at once knew my man. The door-step was so sweetly white and clean that one might have been tempted to eat one's dinner off of it, while the brass plate was as beautiful a picture as I ever remember to have seen. In that door-plate I could see the workings of a rightly-constituted mind. And here let me remark to my courteous Reader, by what slight incidents we deduce——(but I will reserve my observations on door-plates in general for my moral reflections at the end of this chapter).

When the door was opened, I was delighted to find that everything within bore out the conclusion I had drawn of this great man's character from his simple door-step. Though it could scarcely have been more than half-past twelve in the day, I was agreeably surprised to find that the maid who let me in had cleaned herself, and was dressed in a nice, neat cotton gown, of a small pattern, and anything but showy colour, ready to answer the door. I was truly charmed to see this; and, indeed, from the young woman's whole appearance and manner, which was very respectful, I saw at once that Mr. Cruikshank was rich in being possessed of a treasure. What would I not have given once for such a being——but, alas! I am digressing.

Although I looked everywhere, I could not find a speck of dust or dirt anywhere, not even in the corners. "Ah!" (I said to myself, as I was going up the stairs,) "how different is this from the common run of artists. When I went to have my portrait painted by Mr. Gl—k, in N—wm—n St—t, I am sure you might

have taken the dust up in spoonfuls, which convinced me that he was no Genius; for I must and will say, that the man who does not give his mind to the smaller affairs of life, will never succeed with the greater ones; for is it not proverbial that a master-hand is to be seen in everything? And to prove to the courteous Reader how correct my opinion was, Mr. Gl – k turned out to be but an indifferent artist, after all, for he made me look like a perfect fright."

After waiting a few minutes in a delightful ante-room, I was shown into the Study, and for the first time stood face to face with that highly-talented artist and charming man, George Cruikshank, Esquire, whom, as a painter, I don't think I go too far in calling the Constable of the day.

Were I in this instance to adopt Dr. Watts's beautiful standard by which to judge of the stature of intellectual men—that is, "that the mind is the measure of the men," I should say that Mr. George Cruikshank is a perfect Giant, a mental Colossus of Rhodes, or Daniel Lambert; but viewing him in the flesh, he appeared to be of an ordinary height. Directly I saw him, he presented to me the appearance of a fine picture set in a muscular frame, his body being neither stout nor thin.

His features, which are strictly classical, and strike you as a piece of antiquity, and belonging to the Ancients, appear to have been finely chiselled, while Genius (to use an expressive figure of speech) is carved in large, unmistakeable characters on his lofty brow, (though of course, I do not mean that this is literally the case.) Nature has evidently thrown Mr. Cruikshank's whole soul in his face; there is (if I may be allowed the expression) a fire in his eye which is quite cheerful to look at; and when he speaks, from the cordial tone of his discourse, you feel as certain, as if his bosom was laid bare to you, that his heart is in its right place. Nor can I omit to mention the picturesque look of his whiskers, which are full and remarkably handsome, and at once tell you that they have been touched by the hand of a great painter.

In disposition, Mr. Cruikshank seems to be peculiarly amiable, (indeed, he was exceedingly kind and attentive to me,) for he appears to have a great partiality for animals of all kinds. In his room was a perfect little love of a spaniel, (very much like our Carlo before he was stolen from us,) and on his mantelpiece was a beautiful plaster model of a horse trotting, while at his window hung a charming singing canary, to all of which he seems to be very much attached.

Over the chimney-piece is a picture—the creation of his highly-talented fingers—of Sir Robert Bruce, in a dreadful pass in Scotland, being attacked by three men, and killing them, while mounted on his rearing charger. It is painted in oil colours, and is a work full of spirit and fire: though, for my own part, I must say that I do not think Mr. Cruikshank shines so much in Oil as he does in Water.

Having in the most polite way begged that I would take a chair, which I did with a graceful curtsey, he stated he had read Mr. B——e's letter, and added, that he needn't ask if my interesting little work was to be "moral;" on which I replied, with an agreeable smile, "Eminently so, Mr. Cruikshank," and told him that it purposed merely to set forth all the plague, and worry, and trouble, which I had been put to by servants, which seemed to please him very much; and I briefly laid before him all I had undergone, adding, that it was a wonder to every one who knew me how I had ever managed to battle through with it, and that our medical adviser had declared that it was merely the very fine constitution I had of my own that had enabled me to do so; and that it was my proud ambition to become the pilot of future young wives in the stormy sea of domestic life. On which he was pleased to compliment me highly, and was kind enough to volunteer to do a sketch of me in that character, for a frontispiece to my interesting little work.

However, I told him that I should prefer appearing in a more becoming garb, and that I had merely used the pilot as an expressive figure of speech; but that as doubtlessly he would like to introduce me into the frontispiece of the book, I told him I thought the best subject would be an engraving of myself, wishing that I was out of the world on the day after our man-servant had run away with the plate; and I asked him if he would like to take a portrait of me then and there, as I could easily step into the next room, and arrange my hair in the glass. But in a most gentlemanly way he stated that he could not think of putting me to that trouble, especially as he had already got my whole form engraved in his mind's

eye, for there were some people, he said, whose figure, when once seen, was always remembered. And he was pleased to say a number of other things equally flattering to me, but which my natural modesty, and the inward dread I have of being thought egotistical, prevent my inserting here.

I told him, moreover, that, from the life-like descriptions of the different servants I had had in my time, that he would find given in my interesting little book, a man of his genius, I was sure, would experience no difficulty in delineating their features. Upon which he was so good as to say that he had no doubt he should find the work all I had stated. And then, observing that I was about to depart, he opened the door for me; on which I begged of him not to trouble himself on my account; but he persisted, saying in the most gentlemanly way, "that he would see me to the door with the greatest pleasure."

My moral reflections upon the preceding chapter.—How necessary is it for the young house-wife to pay proper attention to all outward appearances; for is it not by them that the hollow world judges, since it is impossible for short-sighted man to see the secret workings of our hearts within us. The first object that meets the stranger's eye on coming to our house is the door-plate, and thus a mere bit of brass is made the index of our characters.—If it be highly polished, of course they conclude that we are highly polished also; if, however, it be dirty, shall we not be deprived of our fair name? What a moral duty, then, should it be with the mistress of every establishment to see that her brass is rubbed up regularly every morning, so that she may be able to go through the world without ever knowing shame.

CHAPTER I.

MY APPEARANCE—MY STATION IN LIFE—MY FAMILY AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

> "Sing! who sings
> To her that weareth a hundred rings.
> Ah! who is this lady fine?
> * * * * *
> A roamer is she,
> * * * * *
> And sometimes very good company."—BARRY CORNWALL.

I WAS born about four o'clock in the morning, on the 23d day of September 1810. I am told I was a remarkably fine child, though it is a curious fact that my intellect was some time before it displayed itself. But my dear mamma has since often confessed to me that this rather pleased her than otherwise, observing, with a pardonable fondness, that great geniuses had mostly been distinguished for their stupidity in their youth; so that my parents felt little or no anxiety about me.

Being the only child, I was not weaned until I was more than eighteen months—to which circumstance our medical adviser attributes, in a great measure, the very fine constitution I have of my own. I was always a great pet with papa; indeed, many of our oldest friends, who knew me as a child, have since told me that he quite spoilt me. My childhood was such a golden dream, and fleeted by so quickly, that, though I am little more than thirty years of age, still I cannot at present call to mind any incident that occurred in my youth which might amuse the courteous reader.

I was not remarkable for my beauty as a young girl, but I am told there was something very interesting in me; and my manners were so winning that I was a general favourite with all, except the servants, who found me one too many for them.

My maiden name was B—ff—n; and my father, who was a C—l M—rch—nt, in an extensive way of business, resided in K—nt—sh T—wn, and had dealings with some of the first families in the neighbourhood. I was christened Caroline, after my mamma, who was nearly related to the R—msb—tt—ms, whose noble

ancestor, F—tz-r—msb—tt—m, came into England with the Conqueror, and mamma says his name was once on the Roll of Battle Abbey. Mr. R—msb—tt—m, who was the uncle of mamma's first husband's brother's wife, is still possessed of an extensive seat near C—nt—rbury, remarkable for its antiquity.

My mamma, who was justly proud of the noble blood which flows in the veins of our family, brought my father considerable property; which, however, owing to his being of a very generous disposition, he soon ran through. So that when I was born, he was endeavouring to recruit his fortune, by carrying on the noble business of a merchant; and was even then possessed of several fine vessels, which used to come up the R—g—nt's Canal, and be moored off the sweet, pretty little wharf of his, studding its banks.

My education was chiefly superintended by my beloved mamma, who could not bear to part with her little "ducks-o'-diamonds," (as she would fondly call me.) until I had reached the advanced age of fourteen, when my papa prevailed upon her to allow him to send me over to a highly fashionable finishing academy at Boulogne-sur-mer, in *le belle France*, where I learnt every accomplishment that can adorn a lady. I soon became such a proficient in the tongue, and acquired so perfect an accent, that my schoolmistress assured mamma (when she came to fetch me home) that I could speak it "*tout-à-fait comme une natif*," (that is, quite like a native of the country,) and which I have found to be of great service to me in after-life.

When I was about sixteen, my personal charms began to develop themselves; and having a fine thick head of hair (of a rich, warm chestnut colour) my mamma would make me wear it in long, beautiful ringlets; and, indeed, even now my back hair is so long that it reaches much lower than my waist. My eyes, which were of light hazel, though small, were considered so full of expression, that they made up in meaning what they wanted in brilliance, while I was blessed with such a remarkably fine, clear complexion of my own, and had such an extremely high colour, (which, indeed I have retained to this day,) that I have over and over again been accused of rouging; (both my little girls take after me in this respect.) I have my papa's nose, which is a fine Roman, and my mamma's mouth and dimple. My greatest drawback, as a young woman, was my exceedingly bashful and retiring disposition, which used to flutter me so, that whenever I was spoken to by a stranger, it invariably threw all the blood in my body into my face; so that I seldom had a word to say for myself—which failing, indeed, I never have been able to get over even to this time.

Long before I was twenty-one, my papa had many advantageous offers for my hand, but he would accept of none of them for me; as he did not then consider me fit to enter upon the stormy path of matrimonial life, for my dear, foolish mamma would never allow me to attend to the housekeeping, from a pardonable pride she felt in her illustrious descent. So that, as things turned out, perhaps it was better that I did not get settled until I had nearly attained my twenty-sixth year.

On the 14th of May, 1840, at the ball of the Caledonians, I met my present husband, Edward Sk—n—st—n, Esquire, who was then a widower without encumbrance, (although, if there *had* been any children by his former wife, I trust I know myself too well to have done other than treat them as my own flesh and blood.) The poor man was so taken with my *tout ensemble* at first sight, that he would scarcely leave me for a moment throughout the evening, and would insist upon accompanying both mamma and myself home.

We soon discovered that he was a lawyer, in a very excellent practice; so that mamma, the next time he called, asked him to stop to dinner with us, and introduced him to papa, who was very glad to see him. After dinner, when we had gone to the drawing-room, mamma begged me to sing; and I obliged him with one of my most admired little French "Romans," when the poor man seemed quite moved by my strains.

The next day, he came to ask mamma and myself to accompany him to Madame Tussaud's Exhibition; but mamma suddenly remembered a particular call she had to make that afternoon on a friend in the opposite direction, so I was forced to go alone with him. When we were by ourselves, in "the Chamber of Horrors" there, Mr. Sk—n—st—n remarked, in a low voice, choked by emotion, upon the charms of my retiring disposition, and said that I was the very reverse of

his poor, dear, sainted wife, who he was kind enough to hope and trust was in heaven.

In about a week, his attentions to me became so marked, that it was the common talk of all our friends, insomuch that dear papa, out of an over-fondness and anxiety on my account, was obliged to ask him what his intentions were towards me; for he was fearful lest Mr. Sk—n—st—n might be one of those monsters in human form who trifle with a young girl's best affections, and then fling them aside as they would a dead pink, or any other faded flower that they had taken the bloom off of.

In this interview, Edward, whose heart I always knew was of too noble a nature ever to deal thus vilely with a poor maid, at once declared his passion, and demanded my hand, which my father joyfully gave him, together with his blessing. After this, Edward became a constant visitor at the house; and he arranged to lead me to the altar a month after the first anniversary of his sainted wife's death, so that the proper decencies of society might not be violated in our case.

I shall never forget the melancholy sentiment that filled my bosom whenever I thought of that joyful event taking place. What an awful step I was about to take! Was it for good—or for evil? Alas! who could say? Perhaps I might become the mother of several beauteous babes! What new feelings and duties would then overwhelm this heart! Was I equal to the task? Alas! who could tell? I was about to leave my dear papa's halls, and to quit the embraces of an aged mamma, of noble ancestry, for the arms of one of whom I could know but little; yet a small still voice within me assured me that, come what might, at least Edward would treat me well. His presents to me had already shown him to be a man of great good nature, and I could not forget his affecting emotion when he implored my acceptance of the jewellery that once belonged to his sainted wife.

The night previous to the day that Edward had appointed to swear to love and cherish me in sickness and in health, and take me for better or for worse, as I sat with my dear mamma and the maid completing the body (the skirt was already finished) of my bridal robe, my maternal parent, with tears in her eyes, desired the maid to leave the room, as she wished to speak to me alone.

As soon as the girl had gone, my mother told me that I was about to take an awful step, and that she hoped and trusted that it would all turn out happily. But that there was one thing that she felt it was her duty, upon my entrance into life as it were, to warn me against—one thing, on which alone domestic happiness could be built—one thing, on which I should find my comfort depended more than any other—one thing, in fact, which might strew either my path with roses, or my bed with thorns. And then she asked me what I thought this one thing was? Probably I might think she meant my husband—but no! it was something of far more consequence to me than that. Or I might think she meant fortune, or economy, or my offspring—(if I were destined to be so blessed.) It was none of these, she told me—nor was it amability of temper, or a proper pride in appearance, or marital constancy—no! these had but a trifling connection with the peace and quiet of my future domestic life compared to that to which she alluded. In a word, she said, I should find the key-stone to all my future welfare rested upon those I should have about me. She referred to—servants. It was only by the proper management of them, she said, that I could ever expect to taste happiness; and she warned me not to govern with a light hand, but to do as she had done, and which, she assured me, was the only way of making them respect and obey me, and that was, to rule with a rod of iron. And then, telling me that her words ought to be printed in letters of gold, she bade me dry up my tears and resume my work.

Ha! ah!—Little did I then—giddy, inexperienced child that I was—see the value of the jewels that fell from dear mamma's mouth; but in my happy innocence I inwardly set them down as the words of one whose naturally sweet disposition had been soured in her dealings with this empty world. Had I but treasured up her truths in my heart, I should not have suffered as I have. (But more of this hereafter.)

It was not until nearly midnight that we had finished my wedding garment and when I retired to rest, I did so with a fluttering heart; and laying my head on my pillow, I said to myself—"Ah! poor Caroline! fond, foolish girl, what a plunge art thou about to make into the Book of Fate! To-morrow!—to-morrow!"

The occurrences of that day I will reserve for another chapter.

My moral reflections after writing the above.—How beautifully fitting an emblem and becoming an ornament is the orange-flower for the virgin bride! For does not its milky purity tell long, long tales of the snow-like affection of the generous maiden who is about to give away her heart to one whose love she has yet to try? Is it not the silver blossom of a tree that bears rich and golden fruit? And is it not left to man to say whether, by casting on the virgin bud the sunshine of his smiles, he shall ripen it into sweetness; or, by withholding them, she shall remain sour after her green youth has passed away? But, ah! how many a tender young wife, who at the altar sighs that her budding hopes may grow into the sweet fruit of St. Michael, finds them, in the end, alas! only converted into the bitter ones of Seville.

CHAPTER II.

OF MY WEDDING, AND MY GETTING "SETTLED."

> "I wore my bridal robe,
> And I rivaled its whiteness;
> Bright gems were in my hair;
> How I hated their brightness!"
> "WE MET."—HAYNES BAYLY.

THE morrow came, and any one who could have beheld my downcast looks, and heard the sighs that came from the very bottom of my heart, would little have fancied that I was so near that interesting period of a maiden existence, which is erroneously styled the happiest moment of her life.

My mamma was good enough to say that my bridal robe fitted me admirably; remarking that, perhaps, it would have looked richer had the skirt been a trifle more full. Edward had presented me with a splendid Nottingham-lace veil to throw over my head on this occasion, and a superb "Bertha" to match. But in my then state of mind, I looked upon these articles as gaudy nothings, attaching a value to them merely as being the gifts of my bosom's lord.

My mamma tried in vain to console me. She told me that I had nothing to fear about entering into life, and begged of me to summon up all my inward woman, to give me strength to go through with it. Had she not, she asked me, prevailed upon Edward to leave his old dwelling, and take a pretty little cottage for me in P—rk V—ll—ge, R—ge—t's P—rk, so that she might always be near to me and him. And she assured me, in a gentle way, that I need not be alarmed, on account of my youthful inexperience, as she would make it a duty to superintend all my domestic arrangements, until I got in the way of managing them myself; which, with my natural abilities, she fondly said, would not take me long. And she further told me, that as a start in life, she had a little surprise for me; for she had determined, that in addition to some of her best pickles and preserves, with which she intended to stock my store-room, before my return from the honey-moon, she purposed presenting me with two bottles of her celebrated cherry brandy, which she declared she would not have parted with to any one but her own flesh and blood—although her friends were always welcome to come and taste it whenever they pleased—that she alone knew the true way of making it—and that she was determined the secret should die with her. And, moreover, she said, that, as after the advice she had given me over-night, I could easily perceive how necessary it was for a young wife to have proper people about her, she would kindly relieve me of any anxiety I might feel in suiting myself with my first servant, by finding me, during my short absence from town, such a one as she, from her knowledge of these matters, would answer for proving quite a treasure. I thanked her with only a sorry smile, being at such a time unable to appreciate her goodness, for my thoughts were far—far away.

At a little after 10, the two Misses B—yl—'s, whom I had selected for my bride-maids, and who are carriage people, drove up to the door in their papa's sweet little pony phæton. Having taken off their cloaks, and changed their bonnets for the white chip ones they had brought with them in a band-box, they looked truly charming; for they are dear, good, showy girls, and were dressed in some elegant robes of book muslin, trimmed with peach-blossom, and carry themselves divinely.

When Edward arrived, I thought I never saw him look better. His hair had been beautifully curled, and he wore the blue coat, and the white trowsers of plighted affection; and when he presented me with a charming bouquet, for the first time in my life, I felt the language of flowers.

My father had bespoken two handsome carriages for the festive day; and when we arrived at the church, I really thought, as we moved in procession along the pews, that my limbs would have given way under me, and that I should have dropped in the aisle.

Of the imposing marriage ceremony I recollect little or nothing. It was all a vague, misty dream to me. I was slightly conscious of a ring being put upon the third finger of my left hand, and of saying, quite mechanically, in a voice full of emotion, once or twice, "I will," though I was so overcome with a sense of the step I was taking, that I had no knowledge at the time of what I was responding to. Edward, as my mother afterwards told me, bore it very well, and quite like a man. I was delighted to learn that he was observed to pay great attention to the service, and seemed to be fully aware of what he was undertaking, in so solemn a manner, to do towards me.

When we returned to my papa's halls to breakfast, I was a tender and affectionate wife, so that when old Mr. B—yl—s said, "Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, will you allow me the pleasure of a glass of wine with you?" and I remembered that *that* was now *my* name, it came upon me as if some one had just fired a pistol off in my ears.

The breakfast was a sumptuous repast, and included every delicacy of the season; but I remember, I was so affected, that I could only touch part of the wing of a chicken, one jelly, some lobster salad, a custard, and some wedding-cake, which was a very expensive and rich one, being one of the very best that Partrington could make.

After my papa had proposed "bumpers, and all the honors," and essayed a speech, which he could not proceed with for his emotion, poor man—but which we all knew was intended to call down a blessing on myself, and (to use his own touching words) "the man who had robbed him of me"—Edward returned thanks in a beautiful speech, which he had read to me the day preceding. It was full of lovely quotations from our very best poets, and was intended to solace my poor papa and mamma for the loss of me, by assuring them that he would consider nothing on earth too good for me, and would gladly part with his last sixpence to make me happy.

Previous to leaving town that afternoon, we had some capital fun with passing some of my wedding-cake through my ring, for that sweet girl, Em—ly B—yl—s, and her angelic sister, to sleep upon.

While I changed my bridal robe, I requested my weeping mother to take care and see that a large piece of my wedding cake was sent round to each of the better class of our friends whom we wished to have the pleasure of visiting, and to whom I had previously addressed cards and "At homes" for that day month. And then taking a last fond look at my papa's halls, I was led, blushing, to the carriage by dear Edward, and we were soon on the road for Brighton, having torn ourselves away from my affectionate mamma, who gave us her blessing and some sandwiches.

I will pass over the happy moments of the first fortnight of my honeymoon. We took apartments in Rottendean, near Brighton, so that we might be able to enjoy the beauty and fashion of the town, with all the quietude of the village. Here it was that Edward cemented the love he had now built up in my heart, by the present of a work-box, with a charmingly-done picture of the extremely elegant pavilion on the lid.

Well do I remember that precious time, when, arm-in-arm, we would wander, for whole hours together, in our buff slippers, along the golden sands, talking (alas! blind mortals) of the happiness which we thought was never to end. All was beautiful and bright, and seemed to us both like a fairy dream, until the second Saturday after we had been there; when I received a long letter from my beloved mamma, informing me that she had not forgotten her dear Caroline; and that at last, after seeing, she should say, forty servants, she had succeeded in finding the treasure she had been seeking for me—that she had arranged to give her £10 a-year, and find her own tea and sugar, as she was just the respectable

middle-aged woman that she should like to place with her pet, and had a ten years' excellent character from her last situation, which had been with a clergyman in the country. She was cleanly, even tempered, an early riser, a good plain cook, and a devout Christian; she was honest, industrious, and sober; in fact, she had just taken the pledge—although, indeed, before that, she had always had a natural aversion to spirits of all kinds—that she had arranged to have the maid in my house about four days before our leaving Brighton, so that she might have it all clean, comfortable, and tidy for us against our return to town; and my dear mamma concluded her affectionate epistle by praying in her heart that her poor, dear girl might find the woman the inestimable blessing that she confidently expected and devoutly wished her to prove to me. (But more of this hereafter.)

I had read my dear mamma's epistle to my husband, and he remarked that he was sure it was very kind of her—very kind of her, indeed, he said—to put herself to so much trouble on our behalf. Though he hurt my feelings by adding, that he thought it might contribute more to my happiness hereafter if she were to be restrained from taking quite so active an interest in our domestic affairs for the future; for, during all his experience, he had remarked that relations by marriage agreed much better the less they saw of one another. Not that he wanted altogether to estrange me from my family—Heaven forbid! he said, but he wished his darling angel (that is, myself) to undertake the management of his establishment herself—although he could not help allowing that my dear mamma was an excellent woman, and meant very well.

This cut me to the heart; for I had strange, melancholy forebodings of dissensions in store for us, of which I feared the over-anxiety of my dear mamma would be the cause.

After three weeks of continued happiness, we left the shores of honest Rottendean, and returned to hollow-hearted London, and I felt satisfied that my husband would no longer be displeased with dear mamma's fond care, when he found what a treasure of a maid she had procured for us.

Moral reflection after writing the above.—"Laws were made," my Edward says, "to protect people's property;" but my opinion is, that they were made for nothing of the kind; or, if they were, that those who made them knew nothing at all about their business; or else I'm sure there wouldn't be half the picking and stealing that there is going on every day in the lodging-houses at the sea-side. For the way in which we were robbed right and left, where we lived at Brighton (or at Rottendean, which is the same thing), and the hole that *that* story-telling, mealy-mouthed old landlady of ours used to make in our cold meat, was enough to turn a rightminded woman like myself crazy. I'm sure we must have been keeping the whole family, we must; for they not only couldn't keep their fingers off our meat, but they went dipping them into our tea-caddy, and candle-box, and sugar-basin, so that one need have had a purse a mile long to have paid one's way with any credit to oneself. I declare it was enough to drive any well-disposed body away from the place; and I can only say, that from all I've seen and suffered myself there, I can well understand King George the Fourth (who was a perfect gentleman) turning his nose up at the people, and vowing that he'd have nothing more to do with the scurvy set.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE TERRIBLE GOINGS-ON OF MY FIRST MAID, AND WHOM WE ALL EXPECTED WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT SUCH A "TREASURE."

"In this bosom what anguish, what hope, and what fear
I endure for my beautiful maid.
In vain I seek pleasure to lighten my grief,
Or quit the gay throng for the shade;
No retirement nor solitude yields me relief,
When I think of my beautiful maid."

BRAHAM'S "*Beautiful Maid.*"

WE quitted Brighton by the stage, and had a delightful drive up as far as Tooting, where we left the coach, and stopped to rest ourselves a short time, as dear Edward was fearful lest I should over-fatigue myself by going through the entire journey at once; after which we ordered a post-chaise, and drove up to our house in great style.

As the equipage rattled up Alb—ny St—t, I could not help having a pleasing vision of the prolonged happiness which I now fancied was within arm's reach of me, (if the courteous reader will allow me the expression.) When we got to our pretty little cottage orné, and I saw the establishment of which I was to be the future mistress, I felt *so* honestly proud, *so* truly gratified, *so* charmed with the new duties that it had pleased Providence to impose upon me—even though I was rather knocked up with our journey—that I now began to feel myself quite another thing.

It was extremely curious to see the heads of our new neighbours peeping over the blinds of their parlour windows, as our post-chaise dashed up, with lighted lamps, to our door, while the boy thundered at the knocker. I believe this trifling circumstance tickled my girlish vanity at the moment; but I'm sure my courteous readers will think the feeling very excusable, when they recollect I was as yet but a young bride.

I was greatly alarmed, and not a little surprised, to find the door answered by my dear mamma; for I was convinced that she knew her station in life too well ever to dream of doing such a thing, unless compelled by some calamity. Edward seemed to be as much annoyed as myself, and did not scruple to speak out about it; and, indeed, his feelings made him forget himself in the presence of the post-boy; for he knit his fine brow, and wondered why my dear mamma could not let the servant attend to the door. But, alas! how little did we then dream of the cause.

When all our luggage had been got into the hall, and we had dismissed the post-boy with what I'm sure was a very handsome gratuity for himself, my mamma at once broke to us the terrible news which was to welcome us home.

About three that afternoon, the good, kind soul had given herself the trouble of coming over to see that all was nice and comfortable against our arrival. She had knocked for at least a quarter of an hour, and fancying the maid might be out on an errand, she had gone a little further. But on coming back, she had found the same impossibility of making any one in the house hear. She grew extremely alarmed, though naturally far from a nervous woman, like the rest of our family. She thought the house perhaps had been stripped, and the horrid ideas that passed through her mind she told us no one can imagine. At last she determined on forcing an entrance for herself; so she borrowed a pair of steps from next door; and with extreme difficulty, and almost the peril of some of the bones in her body, got in at the parlour window.

Down in the kitchen, she found the maid lying on her back on the rug, before the fire, in a state of complete insensibility, while our best linen sheets—which mamma had given out to her the day before, in order that they might be properly aired against our return—were hanging on the horse, burnt to perfect rags, so that they could not even be cut up into glass-cloths; and it was a mercy, she said, for which we ought to go down on our bended knees, that we did not come home and find our cottage orné a mass of black, smouldering, heart-rending ruins.

The state into which this dreadful news threw both Edward and myself may be more easily imagined than described. Mamma's lively picture of the good-for-nothing woman's sufferings filled our hearts at the time with pity for the disreputable creature. We all thought it was a fit, and that the slut was afflicted with epilepsy; but alas! it was much worse than that; and she was, therefore, totally undeserving of all sympathy. Though we were then so wrapt up in the woman, (if I might be allowed the expression,) that we were unable to see through the minx; which fully convinces me of the truth of the popular saying—"that we are all blind mortals."

And a nice state we found the place in, indeed—every thing topsy turvy throughout the establishment—indeed, any one, to have seen it, would have said that the whole house had been turned out of windows—not even so much as a spark of fire in the parlour grate—no cloth laid, nor things on the table for tea. Indeed, had we been dying of hunger ever so, there was nothing in the house for us but discomfort and misery—nor was there a thing to welcome us but some hot water—and even that we should not have had, if my dear mamma herself had not prepared it for our reception. So that—to use a figure of speech—the place really seemed as if it did not belong to us, and that we were nothing better than intruders in our own house.

I was even forced to stoop to light the fire myself; and my fair readers may well imagine my feelings when I tell them that there was scarcely even a bundle

of wood in the establishment. As soon as it was fairly alight, I gave the bellows to poor Edward, who not being, as he said, "used to that sort of thing," was consequently in a great passion; so I left him alone to blow up the fire, while I went to see that deceitful bit of goods, with the epilepsy, as I thought, up in the front attic—for my mother had put her to bed during her fit—(pretty fit, indeed!—but more of this hereafter.)

When I got there I found my dear mamma standing by the bedside with a brandy bottle, giving her some of the liquor in a dessert-spoon, with the view of bringing her back to her senses. Asking mamma how the poor thing (a deceitful baggage!) was, she told me that she had given her some spirits before, and it seemed to do her a world of good, for she had gone off to sleep afterwards. Presently the girl opened her eyes, and from the dull, leaden expression they had, I was quite shocked; for at the time she appeared to me to be literally standing at death's door. I shook her gently, (though if I had known then half as much as I do now, I really think I should have forgotten myself, and shaken the cat to bits,) and asked her how she felt herself now. Upon which she made an effort to speak; but the woman was no longer herself, for she had entirely lost the use of her tongue, and there was no getting any thing out of her. My mamma, however, thought she would be able to understand, even if she could not speak; and told Mary that it was very wrong and wicked of her not to have said that she was subject to fits before she entered our service, and tried to learn whether they were periodical or not, but all to no purpose. So we both left her; and I remarked to mamma, as we came down stairs, that, though I should have felt myself bound to have mentioned the circumstance of her fits in her character, still the omission was very excusable in her late mistress; for it really would have been like taking the bread out of the poor creature's mouth, which no true lady could be expected to do.

When we returned to the parlour, we found Edward with (thanks to goodness!) a nice fire, but he was so surly, (and well he might be,) at the place being so uncomfortable, that he kept banging the things about, though I did not expect he would have done as much so soon after our marriage; and I recollect at the time it struck me as being highly indecent. We described to him the state of the girl, and were much hurt (though we thought it best not to show it) at the strong want of feeling he displayed upon hearing an account of her affliction; for he was too ready to put a bad construction on her illness, and didn't hesitate to say that he'd forfeit his head if the fits didn't turn out to be fits of drunkenness after all, calling the girl, to our great horror, "a gin-drinking toad." This so kindled my mamma's wrath, that she declared she wondered how he could ever stand there and say such things; and that she should be very much astonished if his words did not rise up in judgment against him some fine day or other; for that she was never more convinced of any thing in her life than that we should eventually find Mary, as she had before said, and would say again, and she did not care who heard her—a perfect treasure. Though she could not help allowing that the fits were a slight drawback, and went somewhat against the girl; still, as she could not reasonably be expected to have more than one a month, and would be sure to have warning when they were coming on, why really my mamma said she could not see that there was so much for a body to put up with after all.

Edward observed, that considering all things, he was afraid he should have a good deal to put up with, from a certain quarter that was not a hundred miles off. On which my mamma said something that has escaped me; and Edward replied, I can't exactly at present call to mind what. So that I felt that a storm was gathering round about my head, and that the house (if I may be permitted to use so strong an expression) would shortly be too hot to hold me. Accordingly, with my usual sagacity in such matters, I went up and kissed dear mamma, and got her to go down stairs and look after the tea, for I was anxious to separate them, as I saw they had every disposition to get together by the ears, which I was sure would give rise to a great deal of pain on both sides.

At tea, little was said by either party—and, indeed, it was a sorry meal. For my poor mamma had been thrown into such a flurry by Edward's cruel, ungraceful treatment, that she could not for the life of her lay her hands upon the lump-sugar, and we were obliged to put up with moist, to which Edward has a horrid dislike—and Mary had forgotten to take in the milk while she was in her fit,—and

mamma had had the misfortune to cut the bread and butter with an oniony knife, which gave my husband's stomach quite a turn; so that every thing went crooked with us that evening, and we were not sorry when the time came for mamma to leave. As she was putting on her bonnet, she told me that Edward had behaved so rude to her, that he really had quite upset her, (to use a figure of speech,) and she didn't know how she was ever to manage to get home, for she really couldn't say whether she was walking on her head or her heels.

When Edward and I retired for the night, the sheets which were intended for our bed having been burnt to tinder, and having no others aired, we were obliged to sleep between the blankets, which in no way allayed poor Edward's irritation. So that, from the time we went to bed to the time we got up in the morning, he did nothing but amuse himself by fancying all sorts of uncomfortable things, and would have it that the feather bed was damp; and said that it was ten to one if my mother's treasure (as he delighted to call her) didn't make us both get up in the morning with churchyard coughs at least—or, more probably, with such a severe attack of the rheumatics as we should never get over to our dying days—and which, he nearly frightened me out of my wits by declaring, he confidently expected would render us both cripples for the rest of our lives. Indeed, he actually, at one time, went so far as to jump up, and swear that he would not rest until he took the bed from under me.

I trust I acted during this severe trial as became a woman with her proper feelings about her; for, as this was the first serious difference Edward and I had had since our union, I thought it best to let him know that I was no longer the mere child that he seemed to take me for, and that I was not going to allow myself to be trodden under foot like a worm, (not I, indeed!) For I felt that, if I did not at once give him to understand to the contrary, he might be induced to presume upon my naturally retiring disposition; so I kept on sobbing as if my heart would break half the night through, and did not allow him to have any quiet until I had made him confess that he was in the wrong—and that he had carried his airs too far—and that my dear mamma, at least, had done all for the best—and that he should be very happy to see her to dinner to-morrow—and that her greatest enemy could not but say, that she meant very well.

Thus my courteous readers will see that my first serious trouble in life arose from servants; and I can assure them it took such a hold of my mind, that it made me more than once half repent of the vows of eternal love and constancy that I had made to my beloved Edward; and wish in my heart, though sincerely attached to my husband, that I was not a married woman. For at the time we really believed Mary to be subject to fits, and this made my naturally kind heart bleed with pity for the deceitful minx, so of course I could not bear to find my husband running the girl down whenever he had an opportunity. Though when my courteous readers find out, as I did, that I had a perfect viper for a maid-of-all-work, and learn that I had taken an habitual drunkard to my bosom, I am sure they will sympathise with me, rather than blame me, for all I did for the creature; although, perhaps, they will hardly believe it possible that any one could have been such a fool as I was.

The next morning, Mary came to me with her eyes full of tears to apologize for her drunkenness; while I, in my natural simplicity, imagined that the cat was speaking to me on the subject of her fits. She hoped I would look over it this time, as she did not mean to get in the same state again; on which I told the toad that it was no fault of hers, as it must be plain to every rightly constituted mind, that she could have no control over herself in that respect. She said trouble had brought it upon her, and that it came over her so strong, at times, that she had no power to stand up against it; all which I told her was very natural, (as, indeed, it appeared to me then;) and I asked the creature, in my foolish innocence, if she ever took anything when she found the fit coming upon her. To which she replied, that in such a state she was ready to fly to whatever she could get at; but that her stomach was so weak, that anything strong was too much for her, and upset her directly; and that it was the reason of her leaving her last situation. Upon which, in a most simple-minded way, I told the tippling hussy that I didn't think it much to the credit of a clergyman to have turned her away for that, and I actually was stupid enough (the reader, I'm sure, will hardly believe it) to tell her that whenever she felt the fit coming on, never to attempt to check it, but to let it

have its due course. And that if she would come to me, I would gladly give her whatever she might take a fancy to, (and a pretty advantage she took of my offer, as the courteous reader shall shortly see.)

As soon as Edward had gone to business, I ran up stairs and put on my things, and stepped round to my dear mamma, to tell her all that had occurred, and how Edward was exceedling sorry for what he had said, and had asked me to grant him my pardon; and to prevail upon her to forget all that had passed, and to come to dinner that day. My mamma commended me for having been able to bring my husband to a proper sense of his conduct; and said, that she was not the person to bear animosity to any one, she was sure; though she could not help saying that the names he had called that poor servant girl, under her awful affliction, had given her quite a different opinion of his character, and that she was certain she should never be able to like him half so well again. However, she would try and wipe it all from her mind and begin anew, if it was only for the sake of her own sweet Caroline, (that is myself.)

After we had taken a mouthful of some of the best cold roast pork I think I ever tasted in the whole course of my life, and touched a little stout by way of luncheon, my mamma told me that she was glad that things had turned out as they had, for it had made her again determine to present Edward with the valuable old painting of her noble ancestor, F—tzr—msb—tt—m, who is said to have come into England with the Conqueror, and which relic, after Edward's conduct last night, she had made a vow should never belong to a man who could behave so unlike a gentleman as he did. But now as all was straight, and I was her only child, and the picture had been handed down in her family for years, and she had always looked upon me as the heir-at-law to it, she would have it brought round and put up in some part of the house where it could always be before my eyes, and be continually reminding me of my station in life, and that the noble blood of a R—msb—tt—m flowed in my veins.

When we went to look at the portrait of my noble ancestor, we could not help remarking what a fine head it was, and that any one to look at him might tell, from the likeness, that he was related to our family. Though when I said I should like to have it put up in the drawing-room, and observed that it would be a nice thing to have hanging there on our "At-home" day, as it would show Edward's friends that he had not married an ordinary person, and prove to them that our family were not mere mushrooms who had never been heard of, mamma remarked that, if that was the case, it would be better—now she thought of it—to have our ancestor done up and cleaned a bit, as she said a good deal of the nobility that was in his face was lost from its being so dirty as it was; and that if he was fresh varnished and had a new frame, he would certainly form a splendid ornament for our drawing-room on our "At-home" day. And that she knew a young man who had just started in business in the H—mpst—d R—d, who would do it so cheaply that she was sure Edward could not grumble at the expense.

My dear mamma kindly undertook to get all this done for me, though how she was ever to manage, she said, was more than she could tell; for what with the house and the business she had more on her hands at present than she knew what to do with; and as she truly observed, she was so full of one thing and another, just now, that she really did not know which way to turn.

I thought it best to tell mamma not to mention the subject that evening at dinner to Edward; stating that I wished it to come as a little surprise to him when the picture was brought home. For to tell the truth, I was afraid that she might get talking of her noble ancestors before him; and as I knew that Edward did not entertain the same elevated opinion of the R—msb—tt—ms as my mamma justly did, and had even once gone so far as to call our gracious William the Conqueror, and his noble knights, a set of vagabond robbers, (upon my word, he did,) I thought it would be better not to let my dear mamma have her heart again wrung by another difference with my husband.

We had a very nice plain family dinner that day—a mere simple joint; but so delightfully cooked—done to a turn—and sent up so respectably, that it did me good to see it; and I really thought that our toad of a Mary would turn out a blessing to us, after all. I had told my mother that she must not look for any fuss and ceremony, or expect us to treat her like a stranger, as she was too near and dear a friend for us to put ourselves out of the way for her.

Everything went off so admirably no one can tell—and the plates were so nice and hot—and Mary waited at the table *so* well—and looked *so* clean and respectable—which really considering she had had to cook the dinner, I was quite surprised and delighted to see. After dinner, dear Edward would open another bottle of port, and made himself *so* happy, and got to be such good friends with mamma. Though I really sat on thorns, (if I might be allowed the expression,) all the evening; for knowing their dispositions as well as I did, I was in fear that every minute something would come on the carpet which would upset all, and make them get knocking their heads against each other again; so that when the dear soul left us, I said to myself, "I really haven't been so happy for a long time."

Edward was in such a good humour, that when we went to bed, I thought it a capital time to tell him about the picture, and got him to promise that he would not go on about it before mamma; for though he might not care about our noble ancestors, still, as mamma's family was her weak point, it was very natural that she should cling to the R—msb—ttms as fondly as she did. Besides, I told him that he had a nasty way of his own of saying what he thought—and that if he didn't take care, he'd find he'd get into nice trouble through it some of these fine days; and I was sure that if I went speaking my mind upon every occasion, my conscience would not allow me to rest quiet in my bed.

Mary went on pretty well for a day or two, when we noticed that the creature began to get rather confused in her intellects, and to be quite beside herself, so that she scarcely seemed to know what she was about, and kept breaking everything she put her hands upon. I, in my innocence, began to fear that another fit was coming on, and I should be having the minx laid up insensible on my "At-home" day—and a nice pickle I should be in then, goodness knows. So, with my usual good nature, I asked her if she would take any thing, and whether she thought a little brandy would put her straight. On which the hussy really began to see through my mistake, and to understand that I was treating her for fits instead of drunkenness; and said that she was sure I was very good, and that she would try a glass—which the minx had, and pretended that it quite took her breath away to drink it (the deceitful cat!)—and she actually had the face to come to me and beg another one that evening, saying that the first one had done her a world of good. So that there was I, really and truly encouraging the horrid wretch in the worst of vices; and, as I heard afterwards, she went about the neighbourhood, saying that it was no fault of hers, and that I took a delight in making her tipsy; and the worst of it all was, that it was on that very evening the picture came home.

Dear mamma had stepped round to tell us, that now he was fresh varnished, the dear man looked so heavenly in his new gilt frame, that she felt as if she could hug him. She was in tremendous spirits about it, and told Edward that it was an ornament that she knew she did wrong in not presenting to the British Museum, for that a descendant of the very same family had been Mayor of Norwich three times running. But Edward behaved himself like a perfect gentleman, and only said "he should hardly believe it." A little after eight, the young man from the H—mpst—d R—d came round with the picture and the bill himself, which dear Edward (who, I regret to say, is naturally mean, being penny wise and pound foolish) said he didn't consider quite so cheap as my mother had made out. However, when he saw the picture, he seemed to think nothing more of it, and told the young man to go and get some green cord, so that he might have our ancestor hung, as soon as possible, in the drawing-room.

When the young man returned, Edward and myself went to the top of the stairs with the candles, while that good-for-nothing creature, Mary (whom, I'm sure, we none of us suspected of being in liquor at the time), helped the young man up with the picture, and mamma went behind, so that she might take care that it wasn't grazed against the banisters; and kept telling Mary, for goodness' sake to mind what she was about, for that she would not have any thing to happen to it for all she was worth. Mary, who was in the advance, and consequently obliged to come up stairs backwards, went on very well at first, (though how she ever could have managed to do so, in the state she must have been in, is a wonder to us all.) They had nearly reached the first landing, when one of the stair-rods being out, the carpet was loose, and we were horrified by seeing Mary's feet slip from under her,

while the drunken cat let go her hold of the picture, so that she might save herself from falling.

But what with the liquor the toad had taken on the sly, and what with that which I had given her that afternoon, and what with coming upstairs backwards, she had lost all command over herself, so that, after making one or two vain attempts to keep her balance, we saw her, with horror, pitched, head first into the middle of our noble ancestor; at the same time knocking backwards the young man from the H—mpst—d R—d; who would, I am sure, have been killed on the spot, had he not luckily broken his fall by tumbling right upon dear mamma,—who was providentially not more than half-a-dozen stairs from the bottom—and taking her legs from under her, they all three fell one a-top of another, right into the hall—amidst the screams of my mother, the crashing of the frame of our noble ancestor, and (I regret to add) the laughter of my husband. I immediately rushed to poor mamma's assistance, confidently believing that she had'nt a sound limb in her poor body. And when I tell my courteous readers that I found my dear parent was nearly smothered underneath the young man from the H—mpst—d R—d, and (he must have been eleven stone, if he was an ounce), and that that slut, Mary, (who was certainly no sylph,) was right a-top of the young man, I am sure they will agree with me, that it was a perfect miracle how dear mother was ever able to bear it all as she did—for I am happy to say, she was only dreadfully bruised, and, that indeed, no one was seriously hurt by the fall but my poor noble ancestor, from whom my mother dated her descent, and who was literally broken to bits—though my poor dear mamma (as she afterwards told me) was black and blue all over for weeks. At the time, she thought little of her own sufferings, for she was chiefly concerned about the injuries her noble ancestor had sustained; and when she saw the head of her family all knocked in, as it was, her grief knew no bounds. My husband, I am ashamed to say, did not seem to be at all affected by mamma's distresses; and in a nasty, contrary spirit, no longer grumbled about paying the money for the picture, when it was broken; and, I verily believe, looked upon the accident as a good bit of fun; though I should like to know how he would have liked it himself, the brute!

As soon as we were in the parlour, and my poor mamma had got round again, Edward observed—with a sarcastic grin, that I could almost have shaken him for, I could—"What a pity it was that that poor girl, Mary, should be so subject to fits!" On which my mother burst out, saying, "Fits, indeed! she never saw such fits. It was nothing more nor less than downright drunkenness, that it was; and how she could ever have been imposed upon as she had been, she really couldn't say; but that it had all come upon her like a thunderbolt immediately after she saw the girl staggering up the stairs; and that, indeed, to tell the truth, she had had her suspicions before; and that on the day of our arrival from Brighton, it struck her that there was a strong smell of spirits in the house, but which, at the time, she attributed to the French polish of the new furniture." And when I mentioned that the way in which Mary had drunk the brandy I had given her that afternoon—just as if it was so much water—struck me as looking very queer at the time; and that I was sure, that if it wasn't for our "At home" day being so near at hand, I should bundle the baggage into the streets, directly without a moment's warning—only half a loaf was better than no bread at all—and it would never do to be left in the house without any one to open the door on such an occasion.

Consequently, as I felt I was in the slut's power, I thought it would be better to avoid having any words with her, but to go on treating her civilly until such time as I could turn her neck and crop out of the house.

The evening before our "At-home" day, while I was busy in the parlour with a warm flat-iron, taking the creases out of my white satin bridal robe—which had got dreadfully tumbled in the carriage going to church, and which mother had told me I ought to receive my friends in on the morrow—mamma came round to see us, (Edward was going over some of his filthy law papers,) and with her customary good nature—for she is always thinking of something for us, brought with her a darling little pet of a camphine night-lamp that she had picked up that day for a mere nothing; and which she pointed out to dear Edward would be an immense saving to us in the course of the year, as it gave the light of two rushlights, and only cost one farthing for forty-eight hours. And then the dear old soul, who has always had an excellent head for figures, entered into a very nice calculation as to how many rushlights went to the pound, and how many we burnt in the course of

the year, and what the expense was; and then putting them against the expense of the camphine, she proved to Edward as clearly as ever I heard any thing in all my life, that, with a very little extra, he might be able to buy me another new bonnet every year out of the difference. And then the good old body filled the lamp with some camphine she had brought in her pocket in a phial; and lighted it, just to show us how a child of ten years old might manage the thing, it was so simple; and to let us see how, when turned down, it gave the light of a rushlight, or when turned up, it was nearly equal to that of a mould candle, and certainly superior to that of a long-six. But Edward (just like a lawyer) observing that it smoked when the flame was high, thought such a circumstance might be a slight drawback to its beauty; but dear mamma said that of course no one but a maniac would ever be such an idiot as to go turning it up that height.

As soon as mother had gone, Edward retired to bed, and left me sitting up to finish my dress, and new cover my white satin shoes, which had got dreadfully soiled with the mud in going to and from the carriage on our wedding-day. And besides, I had to clean my white kid gloves, and to let them hang up all night so as to get the filthy smell of the turpentine out of them before the morning. It was long past midnight before I had finished the better part of what I wanted to do; and as I could hear Mary (who had been waiting up to clean the room overnight so that she might have nothing to do in the morning to prevent her being ready dressed long before the visitors came) knocking the things about below in a dreadful ill-humour at being kept up so late; and as it wasn't worth while having a fresh candle put up, just to do the few little odd jobs that remained, I rang the bell for Mary; and lighting mamma's darling little pet of a camphine lamp, (drat the thing! I wish it had never come into the house,) went up stairs, taking my things with me. When I got to my room, I hung my beautiful bridal robes on the back of a chair, and put out Edward's nice clean white trousers ready for him in the morning. I could scarcely keep my eyes open while Mary was undoing me, and was so glad to get into bed, that I quite forgot, before doing so, to turn down the camphine lamp. But just as I was dozing off, I remembered it, and told Mary, who was hanging up my things, to be sure and turn it down before she left the room; instead of which, the minx, (who I'm sure was half-fuddled at the time,) went and turned the thing the wrong way, like a stupid; so that there were both dear Edward and myself sleeping in a state of blessed innocence, while the filthy thing was smoking away as hard as it could go all night, just for all the world like the funnel of a steam-boat, and sending out soot enough to have smothered a whole regiment. As I had got all the next day upon my mind, luckily I awoke as soon as it was light in the morning; and when I turned round, and saw my dear Edward's face an inch thick of black, I really thought at first that I was in bed with a filthy negro. So I gave him a good shaking, and woke him up directly; and no sooner had he rubbed his eyes open and looked at me, than the brute burst out laughing, and declared that I looked just like a chimney-sweep. I gave a scream, and jumped out of bed like lightning—if I might be allowed so strong an expression—and there was the whole place one mass of smuts; and the beautiful clean dimity curtains, that had not been up a week—and the white counterpane—and the toilet-covers—and the window-blinds—and the towels—and my face—and my night-cap—looking just as if they had been all washed in Indian ink; and what nearly drove me right out of my senses—my beautiful white satin bridal robes were actually the same as if some evil-minded person had been dragging them—just for the pleasure of the thing—up and down the chimney, and positively would have induced one, at first sight, to believe that a body had been led to the altar in bombazeen. I declare the beastly sooty stuff was every where,—there was a shovelful, at least, in my white satin shoes—and my white gloves were like black kid both inside and out—and it had even got right up my nostrils—and I do verily believe that a quantity had gone down my throat, for I generally sleep with my mouth open. But what annoyed me so that I could hardly bear myself, was that Edward kept chuckling at all my distress, (just like a man—for of course he knew *he* wouldn't have the cleaning of it.) But when I showed him the grubby state that his ducks were in, I was quite glad to see how angry it made him. And then of course it was all his mother-in-law's fault bringing him her bothering twopenny-halfpenny lamps; and I really thought I should have been obliged to go into hysterics when I heard him say that the next time he

caught my dear, respected mamma in his house, he'd pack her off with a flea in her ear!

And a pretty situation I was in, to be sure. I daren't for the life of me open my mouth, for fear that the hussy should leave me at a moment's notice, at such a time when, bad as she was, it was impossible to do without her; and there were my bridal robes spoilt before my very eyes, and I didn't know how on earth I was ever to receive my friends, as I really hadn't a single thing to put on.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MARY TURNED OUT, AND HOW HER GOINGS-ON ON MY "AT-HOME" DAY NEARLY DROVE ME WILD.

> "Ay, laugh, ye fiends! laugh, laugh, ye fiends!
> Yes, by Heaven! yes, by Heaven! they've driven me mad!
> I see her dancing in the hall—I see her dancing in the hall—
> I see her dancing—she heeds me not!
> Yes, by Heaven! yes, by Heaven! they've driven me mad!
> Yes, by Heaven! yes, by Heaven! they've driven me mad!"
>
> HENRY RUSSELL, "*The Maniac.*"

As soon as I had recovered my scattered senses, I rang the bell for Mary; and when she came up, I declare I could scarcely go near her, she smelt of drink so horribly, though wherever she could have got it at that hour I couldn't, if any one had given me a hundred guineas, make out at the time. (But I wasn't long in finding out where my lady went to for it, as the reader will presently see.) And I do verily believe that such a toad never entered a respectable woman's service before.

With my usual command over myself, I requested her to take my bridal robe down, and shake all the smuts off in the garden, and to be sure and take care what she was about with it; as white satin was not to be picked up in the streets every day. When the minx brought it up again, I declare I never saw such a grubby thing as it was; and it looked for all the world like as if it was made out of what the gentlemen call Oxford mixture; for she had been trying to rub the blacks off with a damp duster! And yet, it wasn't advisable to throw it in her teeth, though I could have given it her well, I could. There was a very handsome and expensive dress completely spoilt, and made as pretty ducks-and-drakes of as anything I ever saw. It was of no use to any one, and only fit to be given away.

I was obliged to put on a high-bodied, quiet-looking, dark, snuff-coloured silk dress, which mamma had bought me before my marriage, as it was a good-wearing, serviceable colour, and one that would not show the dirt. But my troubles were doomed not to cease here; for when I was *tout-arrangé*, and really thought that I didn't look so bad, after all, I found that nothing with any spirit in it was safe in the house from that abominable toper of a Mary of mine; and that she had positively been drinking all my *Eau-de-Cologne*, and filling the bottle up with turpentine; so that when I went to pour some of the perfume down my bosom, I actually saturated my things with the filthy stuff, and smelt just like as if I had been newly French-polished.

But, alas! her thievish propensities didn't stop here; for if she knew where any drink was kept, she would never rest easy until she had got it—no matter how. As for locks and keys, bless you! they were of no more use than policemen. Actually the hussy couldn't even keep her fingers off mamma's excellent cherry brandy; but must go picking and stealing even that; and (as I found out afterwards, to my cost) filling up the bottles with cold tea and new young cherries instead (the nasty toad!) And the reader will soon see how it turned out.

I thought I should have gone mad on my At-home day. I really expected it would have been the death of poor, dear Edward. And I'm sure, for myself, I made up my mind that, come what would, I'd never go through another such a time, not even if I was to be made a princess. I declare the door-step had never been touched—nor the hall or the stairs swept—not even so much as a mat shaken—nor a thing dusted—so that you might have written your name on the backs of

the chairs and tables in the drawing room—and it was past twelve in the day before I could get that slut Mary even to clear away the breakfast things out of the parlour—and I had the greatest difficulty in the world to make her go and clean herself, for she was just the same as when she got up in the morning, not fit to be seen. I had to light the fire in the drawing-room, and dust the place, dressed as I was, myself, or else it would never have been done.

I don't suppose I could have finished a quarter of an hour before the first double-knock came at the door, and that slut Mary not down stairs to answer it. So I rushed up to her room and bundled her down as quick as I could; though she had been at her old tricks again, I could see, and wasn't really in a fit state to be trusted to go to the door; but what could I do? They had knocked again, and I had only just time to sit myself down, and take up one of the books off the drawing-room table, when the street-door was opened. And then, to my great horror, I heard Mary talking, at the top of her voice, to the visiters in the passage; and demanding to shake hands with them, and calling them a set of stuck-up things, because they wouldn't. So I ran down as fast as my legs would carry me, and looking at her as if I could have eaten her, told her to go down stairs directly, and remember who she was, and what she was, and where she came from.

I found it was poor Mrs. B—yl—s and her lovely girls that Mary had been insulting in this dreadful manner, and who were quite flurried at her strange goings-on. Luckily, Edward was up-stairs dressing, or there's no knowing what he wouldn't have done. And I declare, there was not a single person that came into the house that day that she didn't insult, in some way or other; and twice I had to go down to her; for she would go, singing and dancing about, like a downright maniac, and it was only by promising her some warm spirits and water in the evening, that I could in any way get her to keep her tongue to herself.

I was so upset, that instead of my friends congratulating me on my improved appearance, they did nothing but tell me that they could perceive Mary was worrying me dreadfully, and that they had never seen me look so bad before. And they kindly advised me to get the jade out of the house as soon as possible, saying, that if she were a servant of theirs, they should expect to be burned alive in their beds, for that drunken people were always so careless with their candles. While dear mamma (who is naturally a long-headed woman,) said, that every morning she confidently expected to find the place destroyed by fire, and that her dear children had perished in the flames. All which took such a hold on my mind, that I couldn't get a wink of sleep for a week afterwards, and was always fancying I could hear the boards crackling, and kept getting up and going over the house, shivering, in my night-dress, to satisfy myself that all was safe.

We were, at one time, as many as fourteen in the drawing-room, and all of them highly desirable acquaintances, being people very well to do in the world; when mamma, who is so proud of her cherry-brandy, would persuade our friends to take some—if it was only a glassful. So (bother take it!) I had to get my keys, and trot downstairs for her stupid cherry-brandy—which I'm sure I couldn't see the want of, for there was plenty of excellent red and white wine on the table: and that was good enough for any one any day, I should think. Besides, I had set my mind upon keeping the cherry-brandy quietly to myself, as there were only two bottles of it, and Edward had just laid in several dozen of port and sherry. However, I returned with one of the bottles and an agreeable smile on my countenance to the drawing-room, little thinking that I was about to present some of my best friends with a glass of that horrible wash that that tipsy, thieving Mary had filled up the bottle with. Then giving it to mamma, I told her pleasantly that she should fill the glasses, and have all the credit of it to herself. So, the good, dear old lady did as I said, and handing them round, observed to Mrs. L—ckl—y, (who is the wife of Edward's best client, and of highly genteel connexions,) that she should like her to try that; for she flattered herself that she would find it very fine, and not to be got every where, as she had made it herself, after her own peculiar way; and that she felt convinced that any pastry-cook would gladly give her twenty guineas for the receipt any morning, and that she always made a point of using none but the very best cogniac that could be got for money, together with the finest Morella cherries that were to be picked up in Covent-garden Market. When they had all got their glasses, dear, unconscious mamma sat down with a self-contented smile

waiting for the approbation and eulogiums which she confidently expected they would overwhelm her with. As soon as Mrs. L—ckl—y had taken one cherry and a spoonful of the wash, all the rest followed her example. Dear mamma observing that Mrs. L—ckl—y made a very wry face after it, (as well the poor thing might,) said, "I'm afraid the brandy is too strong for you, Mrs. L—ckl—y; but you needn't be afraid of it, my dear—a bottle of such as that would not hurt you, I can assure you. Now, really, I shall begin to think you don't like it, if you don't finish it." On which Mrs. L—ckl—y (who is an extremely well-bred woman) answered, "You're very good—it is very nice, I'm sure." And then the poor thing put another spoonful of the filthy stuff to her lips. Whereupon poor, dear mamma (who was determined not to be balked of the compliments she innocently thought she was entitled to) tried to prevail on some of the other poor things (who really, considering all, had borne it like martyrs) to go on with theirs.

But Mrs. B—yl—s politely excused herself by saying she thought it was not quite so rich as some of mother's that she had had the pleasure of tasting before, and that sweet woman Mrs. C—rt—r, said that she was afraid the brandy had gone off a little, (and so it had, with a vengeance.) On which Edward (lawyer like), fancying something was wrong, and thinking it a good opportunity for teasing his poor, dear, innocent mother-in-law, took a glass himself, and had no sooner tasted it. than, instead of swallowing it, like a gentleman, he spit the whole into the fireplace, declaring he had never in all his life tasted such beastly trash. Whereupon dear mamma, who believed that he only said as much to annoy her, took a glassful likewise, and scarcely had she put her lips to it, than she gave a scream, and the poor, dear soul spluttered it all out of her mouth again, exclaiming—"Oh that shameful minx of a Mary! I know it's her!—the drunken hussy! If she hasn't been and drunk all the brandy, and filled the bottle up again with what I'd swear was nasty filthy cold tea and unripe cherries." No sooner had she made the discovery, than all the poor dear ladies who had partaken of the filthy mixture uttered a piercing scream, while that unfeeling wretch, Edward, rushed out of the room, and I could actually hear the brute bursting with laughter on the landing-place.

All the dears agreed with poor mamma—who was boiling over, (if I might be allowed the expression,) that it was very shameful conduct on the part of the maid, and hoped that mamma would not let it take any effect upon her on their account, as really they didn't mind about it. And then taking a glass of sherry wine apiece, just to take the taste out of their dear mouths, they all hurried away, and in less than ten minutes we were left alone in the drawing-room.

Then we both agreed to make that cat, Mary, finish before our very eyes the whole of the other bottleful, (which we made up our minds she had of course served in the same manner,) and directly after she had eaten it all up, to give her warning, as it would be the best way of punishing her for her wicked goings-on. So down stairs we went, and having got the bottle out of the store-room closet, we made the wretch devour the whole of it on the spot—though from the ready way in which the minx resigned herself to her fate, and from the effect it had upon her shortly afterwards, (for it only made her more tipsy than before,) to our horror we found out that she had never touched that bottle at all—and, indeed, she told me as much when she had drunk up every drop, and had the impudence to say she should like to be punished again. So we immediately gave her warning, and told her not to think of sending to us for a character, indeed. But in the evening, the cherry brandy we had forced her to take, made her so dreadfully bad, that we had to carry her upstairs and put her to bed again. All of which was a mere nothing to us, compared with the good humour it put Edward into; who kept telling us, with a nasty vulgar giggle, that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for driving the poor girl into another fit; and he said he hoped that dear mamma would take care that the next servant she engaged for him wasn't subject to epilepsy, (an aggravating monster!)

Next day I stepped round to mother's, to consult about the best means of getting a new servant as soon as possible; for I was determined on finding some excuse for packing Mary out of the house directly I was suited. Mamma, however, after what Edward had said, declined, with great, and I must say, becoming dignity, interfering in the business further than sending any maids she might hear of round

for me to look at—as she wasn't going to put herself in the way again, indeed, of being reproached, as she had been, by her own dear child's ungrateful husband. But though mamma was kind enough to send me several servants from the tradesmen in the neighbourhood, yet I never saw one for days; for that baggage, Mary, kept setting them against the place, and saying everything that was bad of us directly they came to the house.

One morning, however, as Edward was going out, he met one on the door-step, and sent her into the parlour to me. She was a tall, strong, big-boned, clean-looking, tidy, and respectable ugly woman, and looked as if she wasn't afraid of work: so with my usual quick-sightedness I saw at a glance that she was just the person to suit me. When I asked her what her name was, she answered, with a curtsey, and a peculiar twang that was far from agreeable: "Norah Connor, sure." To which I replied: "I am afraid you're Irish, and I've an objection to persons from that country"—(mother had told me never to take an Irish woman in the house on any account.) But the woman answered in a tone so meek, that one would have fancied butter wouldn't melt in her mouth: "Irish, did ye say! Och! sure now, and isn't it Cornwall I am?" And so, with my customary sagacity, I at once saw that I was mistaking the Cornwall brogue for the Irish one; for having been bred up in London, I could not of course be expected to be particularly acquainted with the dialects of other countries,—if, indeed, I except that of "*La Belle France*." After asking her the usual questions as to "tea and sugar," and wages, and cooking, and character, and, in particular, sobriety—in all of which she seemed to be quite *comme il faut* (as they say in Boulogne)—I arranged with her that I would go after her character directly her late mistress could see me.

Next morning, when we came down, the parlour fire was not even laid, and all the supper-things were on the table just as we had left them over night. For Mary had got up when I rang the up-stairs bell, at six o'clock, to a moment, and though she had come down and got the street-door key out of our room, she must have gone up-stairs immediately afterwards, and tumbled into bed again, for it was clear that she had never shown her face in the kitchen that day.

Edward flew into a tremendous passion, and rushed up to her room, where he thundered at the door so that I thought he would have broken it off its hinges, telling the lazy thing to get up and leave his house that very instant. As soon as she came down, Edward, being determined to see the creature clear off the premises, before he left for business, went and got her trunk and band-box himself, and paying her her wages up to the very day, bundled her into the street, things and all, where the brazen-faced hussy stopped, ringing at the bell, and declaring that she would summon us if she did not receive a month's warning; until she collected quite a crowd all round the house, and kept telling them in a loud voice, so that all the neighbours could hear, that I had behaved to her worse than a slave-driver would—and that she had been half-starved—and forced to live upon sprats, (as I'm a living woman, she'd only had them once!) and that I took a delight in making her tipsy, (which the courteous reader knows to be a wicked falsehood,) and that we either couldn't or wouldn't pay her her wages. Nor did she cease her abuse, until Edward got the policeman to make her move on; which she did, vowing that she would have it all out before the magistrate, and make us suffer for it.

So that there was I in a pretty state, indeed—left without a servant, and obliged to have a charwoman in until that wild Irish cat—whom I, in my blessed innocence, fancied to be a Cornwall woman—was ready to come into the house, (I wish to goodness gracious, from the bottom of my heart, that I had never seen the face of the fury,) and I hardly know, I'm sure, how I shall be able to wait a whole month before telling the reader all about the shameful way in which she went on towards me—and how I really thought the vixen would have had my life before she had done with me.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PRETTY STATE I WAS IN INDEED AFTER MARY LEFT ME.

Oh, Mary, dear Mary, how lonely and drear
The scenes now ungraced by thy presence appear!
Each hall in my dwelling I fondly explore,
And list for thy footstep, but hear it no more.
Oh, Mary, dear Mary!"
"DEAR MARY."

No sooner had Edward packed Mary out of the house, than I suddenly found myself thrown into as nice a mess as any lady could well be in. Twist it and turn it which way I would, the blacker it appeared, and I positively thought that I must have sunk under it. But really my husband is so hasty, (though I say it who should not perhaps,) that he never will look before he leaps; and the consequence is, that he is invariably plunging himself headlong into all kinds of pickles. Indeed, my own dear Edward having no more control over his passions than "a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," of course could not keep his tongue between his teeth, but must go flying at our Mary before the proper time came for getting rid of the girl. And, dear me! if one has not got strength of mind enough to put up with the faults of other people for a day or two, I should like to know how, in the name of goodness gracious, we can ever hope that men will wink when we walk out of the right path ourselves—or that, if we are so hard upon other persons, how can we expect that they will bear less heavily on us when they sit in judgment upon us. Though, for myself, I must say, that I have always made it a rule to let the poisoned arrows of calumny go in at one ear and come out of the other.

I'm sure if Edward had only looked at poor Mary's love of tippling with a proper spirit, he would have seen that it was not so much for a body to stomach after all, and that perhaps the love of drink, bad as it is, is but a trifling vice as compared with the love of tobacco—to which my husband, I regret to say, is a martyr. And such being the case, Edward ought to have remembered that those who ride about in glass coaches should not throw stones; for of all habits, I must confess that smoking, in my eyes, is the most dreadful, and that if I was called upon to choose whether I would sooner be addicted to liquor or tobacco, I really think I should be inclined to take to drinking in preference.

Not that I was insensible to the wickedness of our Mary's ways, but still I do think that my husband might have looked with more Christian charity upon the poor thing's infirmity, until my other servant was ready to come into the house, and then he might have bundled the creature into the street, as she deserved indeed. For in her absence I was so terribly put to it, that really I should have blushed if anybody could have seen me making the shifts I did.

My Irish servant of a Norah couldn't come in for a week or so, and the consequence was that I was left all alone without anybody to assist me,—which pulled me down so low that it took several weeks to set me fairly on my legs again. For, considering that I had Edward's dinner every day on my mind, and the whole house thrown upon my hands, it was more than I could bear.

All that precious day long I had to answer every tiresome knock at the door myself, and really, just because we had no maid, persons seemed to take a delight in calling. But thanks to goodness, they were all tradespeople, whom (of course) I did not so much care about, though I only opened the door to them just wide enough to take the things in, for fear of the neighbours, who I knew would be but too glad to laugh at me in my distress. Indeed, the only person that I showed myself to that day was the butcher's boy, when he called for orders; and who being a mere lad, I didn't mind about seeing me; and I got him, for a glass of table-beer and a penny, to take a letter to dear mother, asking her to look round immediately, and call and see her darling angel (that is myself) in her affliction, which I knew she would be happy to do.

But as it was a wet day, poor dear mother was so long before she dropped in upon me, that I made certain she wouldn't come that morning, so I set to work to prepare Edward's dinner. As he is fond of made dishes, I thought I could not do better than give him a sweet little toad in the hole,* especially as it was very

* Mutton chops baked in a batter.

easy to make, and I could get the baker to take it with him to the bakehouse when he left our daily bread in the afternoon. While I was making the batter to cover the toad with, a tremendous double-knock came to the door, which nearly made me drop the egg I had in my hand at the time. As of course I could not, in the state that I was, go up to the door myself, and say I was not at home, I thought it best to let them knock away until they were tired; and it was not until I had heard them do so, I should say, seven or eight times at least, that I went to the kitchen window, and pulled aside the blind I had let down, when who should it be but poor dear mother, whom I had kept waiting all that time in the pouring rain, and who, when she got down in the kitchen, I found to be literally dripping. Having taken off her pattens, and put her umbrella to dry in the back kitchen, I threw up the cinders, and made such a nice comfortable clear fire for her, and got the dear old soul to drink off a glass of scalding-hot spirits and water, which, I assured her, would not hurt her, as it would keep the cold out nicely, and which she consented to take in the light of medicine, as she said she was certain she wanted it; adding, that she felt as if every bone in her body was broken to bits, and she was sure that on her road she had picked up the shivers somewhere.

I told mamma all that had taken place, and how hastily Edward had behaved, without showing the least regard to my feelings, and had set upon poor Mary for all the world like a Turk. But dear mother told me, with her usual kindness, that she wasn't in the least surprised at my husband's forgetting himself, as it was just what she had expected from him all along; for, from the insight she had had into Edward's character of late, she was afraid that I should have a good deal more to bear with from him, and that my time was likely to be a hard one. Still, as the good soul very truly observed, it was no business of hers, and she was the last person to think of setting me against my husband; though, from what I had told her, she could not help saying, that Edward certainly did appear to her to be just like the rest of the men, and no better than he should be; adding, that the best way would be for me to have an understanding with him the very first opportunity, and tell him that if he couldn't conduct himself more like a rational creature for the future, that he had better manage the house himself. She begged me, in saying this, however, to remember that she had no wish to figure in quarrels between man and wife; observing, with great truth, that as I had made my bed, so I must lie upon it; and, that if my bed were strewed with thorns, however uncomfortable it might be, still it could be no fault of hers, though she pitied me from the bottom of her heart; for, as she said, it must be a sad change for a poor dear that was so thin-skinned as myself; adding, with great kindness, that if she could possibly have known half as much of Edward before my marriage as she did now, that she certainly should have thought twice before she had given her consent for the house of the Sk—n—st—ns to be grafted upon the family tree of the B—ff—ns.

Dear mother, however, promised not to desert me in my trouble, and undertook to procure me a charwoman, who would come in until that Irish fury of a Cornwall hussey was ready to be with me. Mrs. Burgess* was the name of the charwoman, and mother said that I should find her of great use and comfort to me, as she was a married woman, though she had been deserted by her husband —poor thing!—who had run away to America, like a brute, leaving her with a fine family of ten young children on her hands;—that she was a good, hard-working, industrious, stout-made woman; and that the poor babes had nothing but the sweat of their mother's brow to subsist upon; and that it was only by doing a little charing out, and a little washing at home, that the poor creature was enabled to keep her head above water. And mother said, that tired and wet as she was, still she would make it a point, that very afternoon, to go round to the Mews, where Mrs. Burgess lived, and leave word at her loft, even if she couldn't see her, for her to come round to me the first thing the next morning; adding, that all the poor thing would want would be eighteen pence a day, two pots of beer, and a glass of spirits before leaving at night.

When Edward came home from business, he wouldn't make the least allowance for the state I was in, but seemed determined to find fault with every thing, and appeared to expect that the house should be in the same apple-pie order, as if

* I give the name of this deceitful creature in full, as it cannot possibly hurt the feelings of any of my friends.

I'd a regiment of maids-of-all-work at my heels. What made him much worse, too, was, that the baker had forgotten to send round the dinner when it was done, so that he had to wait some trifling twenty minutes until I could get some one to run for it; and when it came home, I declare my nice little toad in the hole was as black as a coal, and quite burnt to a cinder. My husband's behaviour, during dinner, nearly broke my heart; and he cut me up so dreadfully, that I really couldn't say whether my head was on my shoulders or not. Indeed, all that evening, he was one too many for me, for I declare he went on just like one beside himself. He made his dinner off bread and cheese, and kept grumbling all the time, saying, that he would have been better treated if he had dined at a common "*Slap bang*" in the city, (those were his very words—though what on earth a "slap bang" can be, I haven't the remotest idea.) So I left him to his cigar and bills of costs as soon as I could, and went down stairs and sat by myself, all alone by the kitchen fire, as I wished to put an end to his spiteful goings on, and I knew he wouldn't follow me down stairs, and get pulling me over the coals there.

I took good care that he should feel the want of a servant as much as I did, and that he should know that the poor creatures were useful members of society, if they were only properly treated; for I made a point of keeping him without a mouthful of tea till near bed-time. Though I only punished myself in the end, for the cup that "cheers but not inebriates," as the poet says, wouldn't allow him to get a wink of sleep, and he was so restless and cross all the night through, that he only kept getting in and out of bed, and walking up and down the room, and opening the windows, and raving at me like a wild Hottentot let loose from Bedlam, declaring that I was quite an altered woman of late, and that he couldn't tell what on earth had come to me that day. When I told him that nothing had come to me but dear mamma, he flew out most dreadfully, and said that mother was a snake in the grass, who came poisoning my mind and picking holes in his coat directly he was out of the house; and that, as he knew that one bad sheep would destroy the whole flock, he would take precious good care that my mother should never ruin *me*, for he would forbid her the house the very next day; adding, that if I encouraged her in coming there, that he would sell the furniture off and run away from us both, and allow me a pound a week for the rest of my life—which I recollect at the time struck me as being very ungenerous on his part, and not what I should naturally have expected from him; for I thought that, under the circumstances, he really might have made a greater allowance, when he knew that I could get nobody to help me.

In the morning, Mrs. Burgess came as soon as it was light, and it having been, I should say, four o'clock before I closed my eyes, I felt she was knocking me up by waking me so early. However, I slipt on my wrapper, and went down stairs and let her in. I told her to do the parlour immediately, and take care and black-lead the stove before lighting the fire, and after that to wash-up the dinner and tea-things I had left overnight, and then just clean down the door-step a little, (for goodness sake!) for it was quite grubby to look at—and to sweep the hall and shake the mats a bit, for the passage was as full of dirt as it could hold, and I was really quite ashamed to see it—and I also told her to take in a ha'p'orth of milk when the milkman called—and to have the breakfast ready by eight o'clock precisely, as Mr. Sk—n—st—n was a very punctual man. Then I went up stairs just to finish my night's rest; and no sooner had I jumped into bed than I fell off again so fast, that I lay there till it was as near ten o'clock as it could be.

Mr. Sk—n—st—n was in a tremendous passion at what he chose to call my want of respect in allowing him to lie in bed so long, and when he came down to breakfast he was as surly as a bear with a scald head, (as the phrase runs.) He must needs go flying in a passion because the baker had left the wrong bread—for Mrs. Burgess, unfortunately, had taken in a cottage for breakfast—and he would have it that it was my fault, and not the woman's, saying, that I ought to have told her that he never eat any thing of a morning, but "twist." As he was going to office, I asked him whether he would dine at home that day, and what he would have; but he was very sulky, and said that he wouldn't trouble me again, for that, as he was going into the city, he would take a chop at Joe's; and when I inquired of him who Joe was, he told me it was the name of a chop-house keeper near the Royal Exchange; on which I remarked that he ought to be

ashamed of himself to speak in that familiar way of such people. This made him laugh, so that I thought it was a good opportunity to make friends with him, and told him that if he would promise to come home, that I would get him a beautiful leg of mutton; but he said he should like a nice shoulder, well browned, with onion sauce, for the legs we had had in our house lately had not been fit to be seen. But, knowing that he was partial to one with veal stuffing, I told him that if he would only come home to dinner that day, like a good man, I would give him such a treat—I would promise him to put on the table as fine a leg as he had ever beheld, for I intended to stuff it for him, and would take care that it should be beautifully dressed, and quite a picture to look at—all of which seemed to please him very much, and he left quite in good humour.

On going down into the kitchen to prepare the dinner, Mrs. Burgess really seemed to me to be a very superior sort of body; and I thought that she was one of the best disposed and most honest of women, until I found her to be quite the contrary; for at first I really felt interested in the poor thing, on account of her being the mother of such a large family, and all by herself without a husband. I was quite pleased to hear the good woman go on as she did all that day, continually telling me that servants were such a bad lot, and that nothing was good enough for them, and how little gentlemen thought of what we poor women had to undergo for their sakes. And she likewise told me the whole history of how shamefully Mr. Burgess, who drove a cab, had behaved towards her—never treating her as he ought to have done—though she had always been a good wife to him, and had seldom or never flown in his face,—that her life had been one continued struggle with him from morning to night, she might say, and that after the hard battles they had had together, his going to New Orleans under the disguise of coming back in a few weeks, she must say was a return that she never expected. Upon which I remarked, that for Mr. Burgess to run away to America in the way he had done, certainly did appear to me to be going a little too far. And then she was so kind as to hope that Mr. Sk—n—st—n would never treat me in the same way, although, as she very truly said, she was afraid that the men were all alike, and that they really were not fit to be trusted out of your sight for two days together.

I couldn't have left Mrs. Burgess more than five minutes, and was just going to put myself to rights a bit, when I heard a most tremendous scream in the kitchen, and on going down, found the poor woman was nearly fainting, (the deceitful baggage!) for she told me she had just seen a great rat as big as a Shetland pony scamper across the scullery. This, of course, put me all of a twitter, and made my blood run quite cold down my back, for I didn't know that there was a rat in the place; and, as Mrs. Burgess observed, with great truth, but bad grammar, "we hadn't never so much as a cat in the house, and that if I didn't keep my eyes about me, I should find myself swarming with vermin before I knew where I was." Then she was kind enough to tell me that she had got a beautiful Tom at home, which I was perfectly welcome to if I liked; for that though she loved the animal as much as if it were her own flesh and blood, still dear mother had been such a true friend to her, that she really couldn't think of keeping the cat from me; especially, as she said, Tom was such a capital mouser, that he'd soon clear the place, and besides he was so tame, and had been so well brought up, that he was more like a Christian than a dumb animal; for I should find that he *would take any thing from me*, (and so I did, with a vengeance; though I really believe now that the cat had no finger in it after all: but that that smoothfaced old Mrs. Burgess had only brought the animal into our establishment for the worst of purposes—and what's more, that the tale she told me about the rat was all a cock-and-a-bull story, and made up just to get her Tom into the house, so that she might use the cat as a cloak for her own shameful practices.)

After Mrs. Burgess had taken in the milk that afternoon, the poor woman—who appeared very fond of me—would run round and fetch her fine Tom; and when she brought him, I do think he was the prettiest pet I ever saw. He was *so* black, that really his coat was for all the world like your hat; and the dear had got three such beautiful white stockings on his feet, and as fine a frill round his neck as I ever beheld in all my life. Nor can I omit to mention Tom's sweet pretty whiskers, which stood out on each side of his face just like two shaving brushes; so that, indeed, taking the animal altogether, I really don't think I ever saw so fine a cat. I declare he was quite a duck.

Edward was very good humoured, for once in a way, when he came home to dinner that evening; and it was quite a treat to see him at table, for I never knew him eat so much since we'd been married. I must have helped him three times if I helped him once. As for myself, I do think that it was the sweetest and tenderest leg I ever put my lips to, so that even I was tempted to make so hearty a meal, that I felt quite heavy after dinner, and could scarcely keep my eyes open till tea-time.

When I went down stairs to see about the tea things, (Mrs. Burgess always left immediately after she had cleared away the dinner,) it was very strange I couldn't find the milk anywhere, though I saw Mrs. Burgess take it in herself; and when I went to get out the butter, if that wasn't gone as well—a whole half-pound, as I'm a living woman, of the best fresh, at sixteenpence, that I had sent Mrs. Burgess for that very evening! This put me in a nice state, for I had no more fresh in the house, and could give Edward nothing else but salt with his tea, which I knew he couldn't bear the taste of; though, even when I went to look after that, I could very easily see that some thief had been fingering it into the bargain. I made up my mind, of course, that it was that wretch of a Tom, and I tried to catch him, so that I might rub his nose on the dresser, but the thief was too quick for me, and I could have given it him well, I could.

I thought it best, for the sake of the poor cat, not to say a word to Edward about it; so I made him a round of nice hot toast, and put on it as little salt butter as I possibly could, in the hopes that he wouldn't discover it. But my husband no sooner put the toast to his mouth, than he declared it was like cart grease; and when I told him about the loss of the milk and fresh butter, he threw it all in my teeth, and I caught it just as I had expected. After which we got to high words again, and I said that I had nothing to do with the bothering milk and butter, and I didn't see why he should go laying it all on my back in the way he did. What occurred afterwards I will not state; for it is all forgotten, though I cannot say forgiven; for I remember—but never mind, I wont say any thing more about it at present.

But my distresses about that brute of a Tom were not to rest here, for what between him and my husband, they led me a very pretty dance I declare, and to as nice a tune as I ever heard in all my life.

In the morning, when I went down stairs to see about dinner, Mrs. Burgess told me that she couldn't think what on earth could have come to the remainder of our mutton, for it wasn't to be found anywhere, and she really believed that rogue of a Tom of hers must have walked off with our leg in the night; adding, that she regretted to say that he had been a dreadful thief ever since he was a kitten. But I told her that it couldn't be the cat, because he had left no bone behind him. Still, as she very wisely observed, most likely he had buried it in the garden, or somewhere about the house; and so indeed it turned out, for Mrs. Burgess brought me the bone the very next day, picked as clean as if a Christian had done it, and which she said she had found in the coal-cellar early that morning.

This loss of the mutton annoyed me very much, for Edward had set his mind upon having the remains of it with pickles for dinner that day. So I was obliged to send Mrs. Burgess out to get a pair of nice soles, and a pound and a quarter of tender beef-steaks, so that I might stew them, (meaning, of course, the steaks, and not the soles.)

In the middle of the day one of Mrs. Burgess's little boys came to see her, and I was surprised to find what a nice, clean, sharp, intelligent lad he was for his station in life; for his mother said that, young as he was, he could turn his hand to any thing. And he couldn't have left the house above half-an-hour, when up Mrs. Burgess came, apparently quite out of breath, and told me that while she was throwing up the cinders on the kitchen fire, that plaguy Tom had jumped on the dresser and galloped off with a whole sole and a large piece of the beef-steak—and that though she ran after him as quick as she could, that he had scampered up the kitchen stairs, and she only got to the garden in time to see him leap right over the wall with the things in his mouth. After a few moments' deliberation I went to the bedroom closet, and getting Mr. Sk—n—st—n's little gold-headed cane, determined to pay master Tom out well for his sly tricks, (I can't bear deceit, whether in cats or human beings;) and hiding the stick behind my back, I went out into the garden, and called Puss! Puss! Puss! in my sweetest voice, as if I

had got something nice to give him; when lo! and behold, my gentleman, who had found his way back, came marching up from the kitchen as coolly, I declare, as if he had been doing nothing at all, (as indeed I verily believe now the poor thing had not.) When he came within arm's length of me I gave him one or two such good smacks as he wouldn't forget in a hurry—though it hurt me a good deal more than it did him, to lay my hands upon *the* poor dumb animal.

When Edward found it all out, of course he flew into a passion, as usual, and went on in such a way that I was obliged to tell him, even though he was my husband, that he was no man; and he vowed that the animal shouldn't pass another night under his roof, and that Mother Burgess (as he would call her) should take the brute and drown it that very night. Then he had her up and told her as much; and the poor woman, with tears in her eyes, consented to do so; for, as she very truly said, it was so dreadful to have a thief in the house, that if Tom wasn't made away with, she was afraid we might get to suspect *her*—and that after what we had lost, much as it might go against her, she would do as Mr. Sk—n—st—n desired, and see the creature safe at the bottom of the Regent's Canal before she went to bed that night.

When I went down to let the woman in the next morning, I was never so surprised in all my life as to find her fondling the cat, whom she said she had found on the door-step with the very brick-bat tied to his neck which she told me she had put on before throwing him into the water overnight—though how on earth he could ever have managed to have got out of the canal alive and crawled back to our house with that great thing round his neck, is more than I've ever been able to comprehend. Mrs. Burgess agreed with me that it was perfectly wonderful; adding, that after all she had put upon him, the poor creature's life certainly must have been spared by some superior power for some hidden purpose; so she begged of me in a most touching manner to try poor Tom for a few days more, as perhaps it would be a lesson to him, and he would go on better for the future. I really hadn't the heart to refuse, though I determined to keep it a secret from Edward, for I knew that he wouldn't rest easy in his bed until he had killed the poor animal. So I kept Mrs. Burgess's Tom unknown to my husband until it was impossible to keep him any longer, for really the things that creature would do, and the articles he would steal, no one would credit. It seemed to be more like the work of a Christian than a dumb animal. If we had a fowl for dinner, and I missed it in the morning, the cat was sure to have taken it;—if the tarts disappeared, the cat had eaten them;—if the flour ran short, the cat had upset it;—if I missed a silver spoon, the cat must have hidden it;—if any of the crockery or glass was broken, the cat had knocked them down;—if the cask of table ale was empty long before its time, why the cat had pulled out the spigot. In fact, nothing was missed that the cat didn't take, and nothing was broken that the cat didn't break.

And so things went on until just before my Irish servant came in, when all of a sudden I missed a whole pound packet of Orange Pekoe Tea, which Edward had brought home from the city on purpose for me. This Mrs. Burgess assured me Tom must have taken for the mere sake of taking; for she herself had seen him scampering about the house like a mad thing with a bit of paper in his mouth, and which she had no doubt now was what the tea had been done up in—adding, that it really was quite a mercy that it hadn't been a five-pound note, as, of course, it would have been all the same to a creature so dishonest as he was.

When I told Edward all about it, he called me a fool for my pains, and said he could see that the cat was too good a friend to my old charwoman for her to wish to get rid of him. As for Tom's stealing the tea, it was all a pack of fiddlesticks, and he verily believed that he had never been into the canal at all, and that some fine day I should find old Mother Burgess at the bottom of it. However, he said he would soon put a stop to that game, for he would lock the cat up in the back attic that night, and take it with him to office in his blue bag in the morning; and when he got it down there we should soon find out who was the thief. I told him it was a very good plan, if he would only keep it a secret from Mrs. Burgess, and take care not to go letting the cat out of the bag before he started.

Accordingly, I took that naughty Tom up stairs with us when we went to bed, and locked him up in the back attic, safe away from the larder. But not a wink of sleep could we get, for the creature kept on scratching and mee-yowing for

better than two hours, and then we were nearly driven out of our wits, by hearing a tremendous smash, which Edward said, was that brute of a Tom flying at the windows, and told me that if I didn't jump out of bed directly, that they would all be broken before I could say the name of Mr. John Robinson—for that, as the cat was clearly going wild, I had better go up and see what I could do to quiet him. As I went up stairs, I was all of a tremble, and couldn't keep the candle steady for fright, for I could hear the beast flying about the room, and swearing away like a mad thing, as he was. The very moment I opened the door, he flew at me, for all the world as if he had been a young tiger, and dug his claws (which, I can assure my readers, were just like so many darning needles) so deep into me, that I gave a loud scream, and, letting the night-candlestick fall, I flew down stairs in the dark, with the brute clinging fast to my night-dress. When I got to our room, (though I can't tell how to goodness I was ever able to do so, I'm sure,) the dragon let go his hold, and ran under our bed, where he stopped, spitting and growling away like any thing, and with his eyes like two balls of phosphorus, and his tail as large as a Bologna sausage, or my sable boa. Edward took the poker, and I got a broom, and we kept poking and sh—sh—sh—sh—ewing away as hard as we could, for near upon half an hour, expecting every moment that he would spring out upon us again: in fear of which, I kept as close as possible behind dear Edward, who, I must say, displayed more courage, under the circumstances, than I ever gave him credit for, and behaved like another Grace Darling in a moment of such imminent peril. Nor was it until he had thrown a whole jugfull of water at the cat, that the savage brute shot out of the room, and rushed down stairs.

The next morning, I was telling my husband what a nice little boy that was of Mrs. Burgess's, and how fond he seemed to be of his mother, for he always came to see her every day just before my usual time of going down stairs to see about dinner, when Edward said that he saw what cat took the meat now; so he'd just take old mother Burgess unawares, and very soon show me whether our Tom was the thief or not. So when we went down to breakfast, dear Edward sent Mrs. Burgess out to get a pint of milk for him, and as soon as she had left the house he slipt down stairs, and brought me up the basket that she came with upon her arm every morning, and which, he said, he had discovered stowed away in our copper in the back kitchen. Inside the basket we found nearly the whole of the beautiful beef-steak pie that we had scarcely touched for dinner the day before, and a bottle of pickles that had only been used once, and a bar of yellow soap, and a bag of flour, and two eggs, wrapt up in one of our best glass cloths. Then, putting them all back again, Edward hid the basket in the plate-warmer, under our sideboard; and when my lady came in with the milk, he told her, that if she would be so good as to bring up the cold beef-steak pie and the pickles, that he thought he could take a mouthful of it, (no one but a man would ever have thought of such a thing.) Without saying a word, down goes the brazen-faced creature, and up she comes with the dish in her hands, and scarcely a bit of the pie left in it. "Oh mum," she cries, without even so much as the shadow of a blush on her face, "only do just look here, mum! If that thief of a Tom hasn't been and devoured all this beautiful pie of yours, and he must have knocked down the pickles, for there was eversomuch broken glass on the floor when I came in this morning. Oh mum! really it is too bad. Upon my word, that cat is so cunning, that I really shouldn't wonder at any thing he did next." On which, Edward very cleverly asked her, whether she would wonder, if, suppose, the next thing Tom did, was, to put a whole beef-steak pie into her own basket, together with some pickles, and some soap, and flour, and a glass cloth, and an egg or two, just to send home as a treat to his old friends, her children. Then, taking the basket from out of the plate-warmer, he told her to look at it, adding, that he himself didn't wonder *now*, at any thing the cat had done since she had so kindly brought him to our house, and that really she ought to take care of the animal, for it was clear that Tom was as good as a fortune to her, and she could never want so long as she could get a situation for her cat in the same family as herself. Whereupon, the impudent thing put her apron up to her eyes and pretended to cry, saying that she was a poor lone woman, with ten children, and it was a hard matter to find bread for so many mouths, (as if that was any affair of ours.) So Edward gave her the basket with all our things in it, like a stupid, and packed her out of the house as quick as he could, saying, that, if she did not keep a sharp

look-out, she would find some fine morning, that like her cat, she wasn't born to be drowned.

Indeed, I was not sorry that we got rid of her on the spot, for Norah was coming in the evening, only I couldn't, for the life of me, all that day, get over the idea of Edward (a lawyer too!) being silly enough to let the deceitful creature go off with one of our best glass cloths—though I made up my mind to put it down in the housekeeping next week, and make him give me the money for a new one, if I died for it.

CHAPTER VI.

WHICH TREATS OF MY IRISH SERVANT NORAH CONNOR, AND OF THE FEARS I REALLY HAD FOR MY LIFE WHILST SHE WAS WITH ME.

"My heart's with my Norah, for she is my treasure,
And, sleeping or waking—in sunshine or shade—
From morning till nightfall—from nightfall till morning-
I think of my Norah—my own Irish maid."

"MY HEART'S WITH MY NORAH."

EDWARD put the cat into his blue bag, and took it down to his chambers with him that morning, all along with his law papers. When I asked him if he hadn't better take them out and put them in his pockets, as Tom might go digging his claws into them, he told me they were only two or three rough bills of costs for his clients, and Tom's claws couldn't possibly hurt them; for as he hadn't settled the things yet, it was no matter how much he stuck it into them. Then the stupid man giggled like a ninny, although, as I told him, I couldn't see any thing to giggle at, and that if in the end he found his bills of costs ripped up, that he'd laugh on the other side of his mouth, I'd be bound. So off he went with his cat, like another Whittington, to catch the Waterloo omnibus.

To say the truth, I was quite delighted when I saw my dear husband clear out of the house with that odious Tom in his hand; for really our household expenses had been so heavy for the last two or three weeks, that I hadn't been able to get even so much as a bit of ribbon out of the money that Edward allowed me to keep the house with. And upon my word, what with my husband's being so dreadfully close-fisted as he was—and Mrs. Burgess's not being able to keep her fingers off any thing—and that Tom's love of clawing hold of whatever he came near, I declare I had been so dreadfully pinched of late, that I positively didn't know which way to turn, and it made me so uneasy that I couldn't rest in my bed. Besides, to be tied down to a penny as I was, was such an uncomfortable position for a body to be in, that I felt it was high time for me to get up and look about me; and I even began to have serious thoughts of keeping all the kitchen stuff to myself, for I was sure that our maid must get at least a new silk bonnet every year out of our dripping pan—and that, too, when I would willingly have given my own head for it. Moreover, dear mother had advised me always to keep a sharp eye fixed on our grease-pot; for if I didn't, I should find that every bit of candle I had in the house would run away as fast if there was a thief in it, as the maids would take very good care that I had'nt any "dips" of a morning in my candle box, and that my "compositions" would never be more than five and six 'n the pound.

Norah came in that evening with her things in a bundle in her hand; and I found her such a nice, hard-working body—always cleaning up or doing something—never tired nor minding how much I put upon her—and positively working like a galley-slave from morning till night for me—all of which was so delightful to see, that I really thought I was suited at last. Indeed, she was so quick over her work, that after I had made her scrub all the house well down, from top to bottom, and clean all the paint, and take up and beat all the carpets, and give all the furniture, and tins, and coppers, and stoves, a thorough good rubbing, I declare the mere every-day work of the house was literally a flea-bite in her eyes, (if I may be allowed the expression.) I was hard put to it to find some odd jobs to keep her

fully employed; for I had no idea of paying servants the wages I did to support them in idleness, and allowing time to hang so heavy on their hands that they must needs sit all the evening picking their fingers to get rid of it. A very praiseworthy and charming point, too, in Norah Connor's character was, that she was not at all nice about her eating, for as long as the poor ignorant thing had oceans of potatoes, she didn't care about any thing else; so, of course, with my usual kindness, I let the good, hard-working soul have just what she wanted, and, in addition, I used to make her eat up all the odds and ends that were in the larder —for I never could bear waste, and didn't mind what I did for a servant so long as she went on well.

But what pleased me more than all the rest put together, indeed, was Mr. Sk—n—st—n's disgraceful conduct about the business. For when I had finished getting the house to rights—and he could'nt help noticing how different I had got it to look from the shameful state it was in under Mrs. Burgess's hands—my husband, in his blessed ignorance, supposed it to be all Miss Norah Connor's doing; and he even carried it so far as to say to my very face, he hoped that now I had got a good servant, I should know how to treat her, and not go disgusting her with the place by working the girl off her legs, as I seemed to have been doing. Of course I told him it was like his impudence, indeed, and that I had no patience with him, for though he was my husband he was no better than a child; and I asked him, how on earth he could ever be such a stupid as to fancy that the improved appearance of the house was all owing to Norah, and how much work he thought *she* would have done if *I* had not always been looking after her; for didn't he know, that the mice would play if the cat was away. I told him moreover I was sorry to see that he was very ready to compliment *Norah*, though he never thought it worth his while to trouble his head for an instant about the labour and fatigue *I* had gone through, in being obliged to keep dancing all the day long at the girl's heels, as I had done. And I wound up by requesting him just for one moment to consider in his own mind what he thought would become of the sailors and the ship, if the pilot didn't look alive, and neglected to put his best leg foremost for an instant.

But still, on second thoughts, I could hardly be angry with the poor man, for, of course, what could *he* be expected to know about the plague and worry attendant upon servants. And the more I turned what he said over in my own mind, the more convinced I felt that he was in the wrong and that I was in the right; for, Norah Connor being a new broom, it was only natural that she should sweep clean. Seeing, however, what the woman was capable of getting through, and that she was never happy unless she was doing something, it did seem to me to be quite a sin and a wicked waste of money to go putting out our washing every week, as we did—especially as our garden would make such a sweet pretty drying-ground for the things; and the prices I had been giving for Edward's shirts (4*d.* each), really did appear to me to be *so* extravagant. Besides, it is such a dreadful feeling, when you are conscious that you're paying through the nose for things; and it seems to be so unreasonable for people to make you do so, that it's quite wonderful to me how they can ever take the money from you in such a way. So, when I came to reflect upon it, I was astonished how I could have been such a stupid as to have gone putting out our washing as I had done, ever since we had been married; and I lost no time in telling Norah that I had forgotten to mention, at the time of engaging her, that we always did our washing at home.

I was quite delighted to see how readily the worthy industrious creature consented to serve me. As a slight stimulus to further exertions, I told her that I should allow her a pint of beer extra on washing-days, which she seemed to be very grateful for; and I was glad to find that a poor ignorant woman like her was not insensible to my kindness. When it was all settled, I really felt quite happy at having done my duty to dear Edward, for I knew that we were not in a position of life that would warrant our going and flinging our money in the gutter; and that, as his wife, I was bound to save every sixpence of his that I could—especially as, by so doing, I should be able to get a few little odd things for myself out of the housekeeping without bothering him about them.

But though Norah Connor went on very well just at first, still, after a time, she got so frightfully familiar and presuming, that really the woman used to speak to me as if I was her equal; nor could I for the life of me get her to pay

me the respect that I felt was due to me. Now, for instance, I remember, on morning, about two months before little Annie was born, I rang the parlour bell, and when the woman came into the room, I said in a quiet voice, "I want a glass of water to drink, Norah."

"You want to drink a glass of wather?" she replied. "Well, I've no objection. Drink away, darlin'!!"

"Then," I continued, blandly, "I should feel obliged if you would be so good as to let me have one directly."

"Let you have one?" she exclaimed. "Faith, an' didn't I give you permission just now?"

This was past all bearing; but I restrained myself, and merely said, with becoming dignity, "I didn't have you up stairs, Norah, to know whether *you* would permit *me* to drink a glass of water in my own house, or not."

To which she replied, as familiarly as if she were speaking to the servant next door: "Well, by my sowl, when I heard you ask me if I'd let you have the same, I thought you mighty stupid at the time. An' what is it you *do* want, then, mavourneen?"

"Why," I returned, in measured terms, remembering my station, "I want what I told you before, as plainly as a person could speak—a glass of water."

"Well, then," she cried, "by the powers! if I were you, I'd get it! Isn't there plenty down stairs, honey?"

"But," I continued, calmly, "perhaps you will be kind enough, Norah, to bring me a glass up *here*."

"Och!" she exclaimed, "so, an' it's only a glass you're wantin' me to fetch you, afther all! A glass wid nothin' in it, is it you mane?"

"No," I replied, almost losing my temper, "A glass of *water*, woman, and *not* a glass without any thing in it! Do you understand me *now?*"

"Out an' out," she cried, with a low wink. "You'd be havin' a glass of wather wid somethin' in it! Oh, go along wid you—wanting a drop on the sly, now! You're takin' to the bottle, though, betimes this mornin', I'm thinkin'."

I'm sure my fair readers can easily imagine that this threw me into such a passion that it quite made my blood boil. I told the fury to hold her tongue, and never dare to open her mouth about such things again. But the impudent hussey only made me worse, for she kept declaring, "mum was the word with Norah," and saying, "that I needn't go flurryin' mysilf about her findin' out my sly thricks," and telling me to be "asy, for that the masther should never hear of it from hersilf."

So that at last, I declare, I was positively obliged to run up stairs into my own bed-room, in order to get rid of the creature. There I threw myself on the sofa, in the most dreadful state of mind, I think, I ever was in all my life; and, torn with all kinds of horrid ideas, I said to myself, "Norah washes very well, it is true—but alas! what washing can compensate me for this!"

What vexed me, though, even more than Norah, was, that when I went to tell my husband, on his return from business that evening, about how the woman had insulted me, he wouldn't hear a word of it, and said, he was sick and tired of my complaints against the maids, and he never set foot in the house but I had always got some long rigmarole tale about the servant's bad conduct; adding that it was impossible they should be invariably in the wrong; and he firmly believed it was quite as much, if not more, my fault than theirs. And he even had the impudence to declare, (I thought it best to let him have his own way for once, and go on till he was tired,) that he had quite worry and bother enough of his own, at office, and that when he came home, fagged and worn out, to his own fireside, he was determined at least to enjoy peace and quiet at his hearth; and then he asked what on earth I thought he had married me for, (as if I was going to tell him;) when the cruel wretch said—it was only to have a happy home! I told him that it was a nice insult to my own face, indeed, and that he seemed determined to find fault with every thing that day, as nothing, however good it was, would please him; whereupon Mr. Sk—n—st—n went on, I'm sure, without knowing what he said, for he declared that I was a millstone round his neck, and the torment of his life; adding, that he begged me once for all to understand, that he would *not* be pestered every day with my bickerings with the servants; and he had made up his mind that if ever I opened my mouth to him again on the subject, that he would put on his hat that very moment and go and spend his evening

some tavern, where at least he could *enjoy* himself. Besides, he told me, he would see that Norah was worth her weight in gold to any person who knew how to humour her; for the house had never been so clean ever since we had been married; and the way in which the girl dressed a potato made her so invaluable in his eyes, that he wasn't going, he could tell me, to have her driven out of the house by me. So that anybody might have seen, like myself, with half an eye, that my gentleman didn't care so much about "*his own fireside*" after all, and instead of "*his hearth*," indeed, being uppermost in his mind, that really and truly his stomach was at the bottom of it.

As for the matter of that Norah's potatoes, too, I'm sure I couldn't see any thing so wonderful about them. But, of course, Mr. Edward must go thinking them dressed so beautifully, just because they came up in their jackets; though for my own part, I never could bear the look of the things in their skins; and what's more, it wasn't decent to have them coming to table in such a state. And the next day I told my lady as much, adding that she would be pleased to peel the potatoes before bringing them to the parlour for the future, as they were only fit for pigs to eat in the way she sent them up. Whereupon the vixen flew into *such* a rage, and abused and swore at me in *such* a way, calling me every thing that was bad, and declaring that she would pay me out for it. And then, in the height of her passion, the spiteful fury, with the greatest coolness in the world, emptied all the dripping out of the frying-pan she was doing some soles in, right into the middle of the nice, brisk, clear fire, and created such a blaze, that I'm sure the flames must have been seen at the top of the house. Knowing that it was just upon our time for having the chimney swept, I felt certain that it must be on fire; and when I rushed out into the garden, there it was, sure enough, raging away, and throwing out volumes of sparks and smoke, just like the funnel of a steam-boat at night-time—with such a horrid smell of burning soot, that all the little boys came running from far and near up to our door and shrieking out, Fire! Fire! like a pack of wild Indians.

When I went back into the kitchen, the spiteful thing was impudent enough to tell me just to look there and see what I had made her do wid my boderations, (as she called it,) adding, "that it wasn't herself, though, that would be afther desarting me in my distriss." Feeling, however, that it was not the time to talk to her just then, I made her rake out every bit of fire there was in the grate, and after that I told her to run up to the top of the house with a couple of pails full of water, and to get out on the roof and pour it all down the chimney as quick as she could.

Up she went, while I waited below all of a twitter, expecting every minute that I should have a whole regiment of fire-engines come tearing up to the door, and putting us to goodness knows what expense for nothing; when all of a sudden I heard the water come splashing down right into the parlour overhead, and saw in an instant that that stupid thing of a Norah must have got blinded with the smoke up above, and mistaken the chimney, so that she had gone pouring it down all over my beautiful stove in the dining-room. In an instant I put my head up the kitchen chimney and hallooed out to her as loud as ever I could, "No—rah! you must pour it down here." I declare the words were scarcely out of my mouth when down came such a torrent of water and soot, right in my face and all over my head and shoulders, and down my neck, that anybody to have seen me would have sworn some one had been breaking a large bottle of blacking over my head; while immediately afterwards, as if only to make matters worse, I heard a tremendous shout in the street, and on running to the window I at once knew that the parish engine was at hand: for, tearing along the pavement on the opposite side of the way was a whole regiment of, I should say, twenty or thirty little dirty boys pulling at a rope, and dragging along a nasty, ugly, red, trumpery little machine, which, I'm sure, if the house had been in flames, could have been of no more use to us than a squirt upon four wheels; while the mischievous young urchins kept hurraing away as if it was a good bit of fun, and little thinking that what was sport to them was (as with the toad in the fable) near upon death to me, and a good bit of money out of my pocket into the bargain.

When Norah Connor came down and saw what a pretty pickle both my cap and face were in, the only thing she did was to cry out, "Och, murther, I niver saw such a fright as ye look. What on airth have ye been gettin' up to now?" and when I told her what had happened, she actually had the impudence to add

that "sure an' I wasn't fit to be trusted alone for two minutes together." And then, seeing the parish engine at the door, she wanted to go—and I declare it was as much as ever I could do to prevent the fury—rushing out, and (to use her own words) "larruppin' the Badle—just to tache the dirty blaggeard not to come robbin' the masther agin in that way."

However, I was determined not to have the door opened; so after the beadle had hammered away at it like a trunk-maker, for better than half an hour, he grew disgusted and went off with those impudent young monkeys of boys, and that stupid little watering-pot of a parish engine.

When I went into the parlour, it was in such a dreadful state that really it is impossible for me to give my readers any idea of the dirt and filth about it—unless, indeed, I were to say that it was as grubby as one of my father's coal-barges. I saw that I had got a very pretty week's work cut out for me, and how Norah would ever be able to get through with it all, I couldn't say. As for my beautiful bright stove, it was as rusty and as brown as a poor curate's coat, and the hearth-rug was as black as the face of that impudent cymbal-player in the Life Guards.

All I know is, that we had to take every thing out of the place; and, as I expected Edward to knock at the door every minute, I told Norah to light a fire and lay the cloth for dinner in the drawing-room. When I went up stairs to put myself to rights, it took me full half an hour, and nearly a whole cake of Windsor soap, before even I could bear the look of myself; and all the time I kept inquiring in my own mind, what I had better do in the situation that I was; for positively what between that Norah Connor's impudence and spite, and my husband's always taking her side, I really didn't know how to act; for I felt myself to be (as Edward calls it) on the horns of a dilemma, and was so dreadfully tossed about, that I couldn't undertake to say whether I was on my head or my heels. So after weighing it well, I determined upon breaking the dreadful news to my husband as gently as I could, directly he set foot in the house, and before he could catch sight of the mess in the dining-room. Accordingly, as soon as I heard his knock I went and opened the door myself, and while he was hanging his hat up in the hall, I said to him—as kindly as I could, I'm sure—"Oh, Edward! Norah *has* been going on so to-day, you can't think."

The more one does, however, the more one may, and I declare there was no pleasing Mr. Sk—n—st—n that day any how; for instead of trying to console me in my distress, he only banged his hat on his head again, and saying, that "It was always servants, servants, servants! from morning till night, and he'd be hung if he'd stand it any longer," he bounced out of the house again, slamming the door after him like a cannon, and went sulking off to some tavern in the neighbourhood, and never thought fit to return till five-and-twenty minutes past midnight —when he came home with his hair smelling of tobacco-smoke fit to knock one down, and the bow of his stock twisted right round to the side of his neck, and his intellects so muddled, that, do what I would, I couldn't get him to carry the night candlestick straight, so that he would keep dropping the tallow-grease all over the carpets, as he went up stairs to bed.

In the morning, however, I was determined to let him see that I was not going to put up with his tantrums, indeed; so I never spoke to him all breakfast-time, and although he made, I should say, some dozen advances to me, yet I wasn't to be carneyed over in that way, I could tell him, and so merely gave him a plain "Yes" or "No," as short and snappishly as I could; consequently, my gentleman hadn't a very pleasant time of it, and went off to business quite early, thoroughly ashamed of himself, I could see. Nor did I choose to make it up with Mr. Sk—n—st—n until the day came for him to go over the housekeeping expenses, when, as dear Edward paid the money without a single question, I thought I might as well forgive him.

Of course these little breezes didn't make me relish Miss Norah Connor's airs any the better, though she certainly did her work very well, and I couldn't find any fault with her about that. Still, as I felt that she was destroying my peace of mind, and was really *so* impudent to me, I couldn't help considering it a duty I owed to my husband to get rid of her as quickly as I could. As for her being an excellent servant too, why of course I knew there was as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it; and besides, Norah Connor really appeared to me to have been brought up at Billingsgate.

But in a short time *that* Norah gave me such a dose, that not knowing what she

might treat me to after it, I really should have been worse than a child if I had taken it quietly. For one afternoon I was in the kitchen, and if the hussey didn't spill a whole basinful of water on the floor, and then actually seemed in no way inclined to wipe up the slop on the boards, so I begged she would just take a cloth, and do it immediately. But the minx replied, "Och! sure an' don't it always soak in, in my counthry," which was a good deal more than I felt I ought to put up with. So I told her very plainly, "that her country, then, whatever it was, must be a filthy dirty place, and only fit for a set of pigs to wallow in." No sooner were the words out of my mouth, than she turned round sharp upon me, and shrieking out, "Hoo! hubbaboo!" (or some such savage gibberish,) seized the kitchen carving-knife, which was unfortunately lying on the table, and kept brandishing it over her head, crying out, "Hurrah for ould Ireland! the first jim of the sa!—and a yard of cowld steel for them as spakes agin' her!" Then she set to work, chasing me round and round the kitchen table, jumping up in the air all the while, and screaming like one of the celebrated wild cats of Kilkenny. I flew like lightning, and she came after me like any thing. I declare the vixen kept so close to my heels, that I expected every minute to feel the knife run into me between my shoulders, just where I had been cupped when I was a child; and the worst of it was, there wasn't even so much as a dish-cover or a saucepan-lid near at hand that I might use as a shield, and I couldn't help fancying that every moment my gown would go catching in one of the corners of the table, and that the fury would seize hold of me by my back hair in a way, that even if I wasn't killed by the fright on the spot, would at least turn my head for life. But, luckily, being a slighter-made woman than Norah, the breath of the tigress failed her before mine did, and while she stopped to breathe a bit, I rushed up the kitchen-stairs—shot into the parlour—locking and bolting the door after me—and threw myself into the easy chair, where I sat trembling like a blancmange, determined not to leave the room until Edward came home, when I would certainly tell him all about Norah's wicked behaviour to me. And yet after he had told me so often as he had that he hoped the subject would drop, I declare I was half afraid to throw myself upon him for protection.

Nor was I mistaken in my man, for directly I said to Mr. Sk—n—st—n, "I have a disagreeable duty to perform this evening, Edward: the fact is, Norah—" the wretch cut me short, and cried out, "What! you're at it again, eh? Norah! Norah! nothing but Norah! Why the deuce can't you leave the poor woman alone for a minute." And so saying, the aggravating monster turned on his heel and went and dined out again.

This had such an effect upon me, that I felt I couldn't touch a morsel of the dinner, (although it was a rabbit smothered in onions, which I'm very partial to;) so I sat in my chair, sobbing away, until Norah came into the room to know whether she should bring the rabbit up. Yes; there the minx was, as calm and cool as if nothing at all had happened; for, to do the woman justice, her rage never lasted long,—when once it was over, why she had done with it—and I really believe that she couldn't help it, after all. When the stony-hearted tigress saw me crying, she came up to me, and laying her hand on my back in the most familiar and feeling manner, said, in her usual impudent way, "Come, darlin'! don't be afther frettin' the eyes out of your head now! Sure an' isn't it mysilf that's givin you my pardin long ago if that's what you're wantin'."

I merely begged of her to leave the room, adding, that I was surprised that she should think of coming up to me.

"Well, may be," she replied, with all the coolness imaginable, "it does, no doubt, seem mighty kind of me to do the likes, after all ye said and did to me, too,—puttin' my blood up, and wellnigh makin' me murther ye, as ye did. Ah, it was too bad of ye—so it was! But you're sorry for it, I see, and Norah isn't the girl to bear malice, sure."

The woman's impudence really took me so aback, that all I could do was to echo her own words and exclaim, in astonishment, "I'm—sorry—for it!"

"I'm glad to hear you say ye are, so I am," she continued. "But sure an' you're my misthress, and I wont let ye be afther lowerin' yersilf by askin' for my pardin, as ye are. So come, say no more about it, mavourneen; but just thry to ate a bit, if it's the smallest taste in life now, or ye'll go makin' yersilf out an' out ill for my sake."

And really and truly the stupid thing would keep bothering me so, that being frightened out of my wits lest I should offend her again, I had to try and eat some of the rabbit, (which was very delicious,) nor would she leave me until she had made me drink off a glass of wine, (which certainly did me a great deal of good.) Indeed, altogether, the curious compound of a woman pitied me so, and was so kind and attentive to me, that I wished to goodness gracious she could only get rid of her horrible temper, and then I should not be obliged to prevail upon Edward to turn her out of the house, as I must.

The next morning, I took an opportunity, at breakfast, of getting my husband to listen to what Norah had done to me; and then, if he hadn't the coolness to ask me why I had not told him all about it when he came home to dinner the day before. But I made him heartily ashamed of himself by reminding him that he had bounced out of the house like a cracker directly I opened my mouth to him on the subject. Whereupon he remarked that I had cried "Wolf" so often, that there was no knowing when I was really in trouble.

However, though Mr. Sk—n—st—n has his little peculiarities, still I must say he is not so very bad a man at heart, after all, for he looked at Norah's shameful goings on towards me in a very proper light, observing, that after what I had said to a woman of her passionate disposition, it was a mercy that she hadn't killed me on the spot. Though, of course, he couldn't let well alone, but must go and side with Miss Norah in the end; for he told me that I ought not to have insulted the girl in the way I had, and that if, in her anger, she had put an end to my life—though the woman would have suffered for it—still *I* should have been nearly as much to blame as *she* was; adding, that it really struck him, that if I happened to get hold of a good, honest, industrious servant, who merely wanted to be humoured a little, that I must needs go driving continually at her weak point, until I forced her out of the house; for I seemed to think that the wages were all that was due from the mistress to her servants, forgetting that I had undertaken to make my house their home, and that if I stripped it of all the attributes of one, and converted it into a prison instead, where they were to see no friends, and be kept to so many months' hard labour, why, it was only natural that they, poor things, finding I had forgotten my duty to them, should, in their turn, forget their duty to me. Besides, he added, I should remember that though there was little or no excuse for the mistress's non-performance of her part of the contract, still some allowance should be made for the poor creatures, whose very deficiencies of education made them often do wrong merely because they had never been lucky enough to have learnt better. And then he had the impudence to ask me what I should say if, when I asked my next servant what kind of a character she could have from her last mistress, the girl in return were to ask me what kind of a character *I* could have from my last *servant?* I told him that I should say that it was very like her impudence, indeed, and tell her to get out of the house directly—adding, that I never heard of such an absurd idea in all my life before.

"Of course," Edward replied, smiling at what I had said, (though I'm sure I could see nothing to laugh at;) "and yet, perhaps, it is not quite so absurd a notion as you seem to fancy. You forget that the girl comes into your house to be subject to your every little whim and caprice, and that not only her bread, but also her comfort and happiness are dependent upon *your* character; and it stands to reason, from the very nature of things, that the slave must suffer more from the tyrant than the tyrant can possibly suffer from the slave."

I told him very plainly that I had no patience with him, talking in such a way about tyrants and slaves, indeed, and that they were sentiments only worthy of a low radical meeting. I was quite pleased, however, when I dumb-founded him, by asking him how he ever thought society would get on upon such dreadful principles?—adding, that for my own part, I would have everybody who went putting such horrid ideas into the poor ignorant things' heads drawn and quartered as they used to be in the good old times. And I told him, too, that as he seemed to know so much about the management of servants, I should just like to hear how he would behave to Miss Norah after chasing me round the table with a knife in her hand, as she had; and that of course I supposed he would carry out his fine principles with her, and go making the toad a present for it—just as an encouragement for the future. But he merely replied, that he should do no such thing; adding, that I should see how he would act, for he would have her up

then and there, and talk to her. Accordingly, he rang the bell, and in my lady came.

"Shut the door, Norah; I want to speak to you," he began; and when she had done so, he continued—"Your mistress has been telling me about this sad affair with the knife, Norah."

"Yes, masther," she replied, with her usual impudence; "but sure an' I've forgotten it all long ago—so I have. Wasn't it myself that tould her I'd think no more about it."

"Yes; but, Norah," he continued, "don't you think that its you who require your mistress's forgiveness, after attempting her life, as you did yesterday."

"Thrue, masther," answered Norah; "but, faith, an' didn't she say that ould Ireland, the first jim of the sa, was a pigsty, and I thought of nothing else at all, at all."

"Well, now, listen to me, Norah," he said. "Perhaps I should astonish you if I were to tell you that you could be transported for what you did to your mistress yesterday."

"Thransported, did ye say," she replied. "An' sure an the mistress had no rights to be afther blaggearding my country as she did."

"No, Norah," he replied; "that was very inconsiderate of *her*; but it was both wicked and mad of *you* to think that you could add to your country's honour by shedding the blood of one whom you were bound to respect."

"Thrue, again, Masther," she answered, with consummate impudence. "But, by my sowl, we are a warrm-hearted people, so we are; an' when the blood's up, Pat hasn't time to be thinkin' of thrifles."

"Exactly so; and it is for that reason, Norah," continued my husband, "that persons like ourselves are frightened to live in the same house with you."

"Frighthined was it ye were saying," she replied; "sure an' if you're good to us, don't we take it to heart as warrmly as when ye trate us badly. But, by St. Pathrick, it's the bad we forgit, and the good we remimber. Faith, an the masther hisself will say that!"

"I cannot deny it," returned Edward; "and, indeed, it is solely on that account, Norah, that I speak to you in the temperate manner I am at present doing; for I know that it is the character of your nation, to be touched by a kind word, while you are only enraged by a harsh one."

"Faith, an' that's what we are," cried the woman, who really looked as if she was going out of her wits on the spot. "An' blessings on the masther who said that same. An' by the powers, it isn't Norah that'll be the dirty blaggeard ever to lave him as long as she lives."

"Yes, but, Norah," returned my husband, with certainly more reason than I ever gave him credit for, "after your conduct to your mistress, I should be forgetting my duty to her, were I to consent to your remaining with me."

"Och, murther!" she exclaimed, as cool as ever. "You niver mane to say, that you'll be afther driving Norah from your door?"

"Yes, Norah," he answered, with a firmness that astonished me; "this day month, if you please! You can go down to your work again now."

"Ah, niver say it—niver say it, honey," she cried, with the tears starting in her eyes—"ah, niver say it. Only let Norah stop wid ye, and by St. Pathrick, there's nothing she'll be thinking too good for ye. Sure, and won't she work night and day for ye both. Oh! spake a word to him, mistress, and say ye won't be after puttin' my blood up agin, and I'll be as kind and good to the pair of ye as if ye were my own dear childer."

"No, Norah!" my husband replied, "it is useless to think that you and your mistress can ever live amicably together; and my mind is made up. So go down stairs quietly, like a good soul, and don't let me hear any thing more about it."

I'm sure I never witnessed, in all my life, such a scene as followed. I declare that Norah went on more like a mad thing than a Christian. At one moment, she was crying like a child, at another, she was raving like a maniac. Now she was all penitence, and the very next minute, her eyes were starting out of her head and she was swearing to be revenged; and she had no sooner finished blessing

us, in case we let her stop, then she would set to work and heap on our heads, if we sent her away, all kinds of the most dreadful curses one could think of, and which quite made my flesh crawl, I declare.

But Edward was very stern, and wouldn't give in in the least; so that at last, Norah, finding all her tears thrown away upon us, and that she was only wasting her breath by going on in the way she did, turned round, and swearing that we shouldn't send her away, went down to the kitchen again. On going to the top of the stairs and listening, I could hear her muttering all kinds of dreadful things against me, though I'm sure I hadn't given her warning, and couldn't see that I had done so much towards her, after all. But the fact was, the creature I knew had had a spite against me ever since she set foot in the house.

I went back into the parlour, and asked Edward just to come and listen how the woman was raving, but he is such a stupid, obstinate man, that he wouldn't oblige me, and said that it was a meanness that any decent person would be ashamed of doing.

Really I was so frightened of the woman after what I had heard her say she would do to me, that I asked Edward whether he hadn't better make it up with her this once, and tell Norah that she might stop—for as she had promised to work night and day for us, it really struck me she couldn't do more, and that she was a treasure that we ought not to think of parting with just for a hasty word or so. But of course Mr. Sk—n—st—n must have his own way, and can't believe any one to be in the wrong but his wife, for he merely answered, that it was ridiculous to think of it, for Norah was as combustible as a barrel of gunpowder, and I was no better than a brimstone match to her. Whereupon I very properly said that I didn't know what on earth he meant by his brimstone indeed, and that as for the matter of matches *he* needn't talk, for I could tell him that he was more than a match for anybody—so come! Then he went on with some more of his high-flown rubbish upon what I had said about the woman's own offer to work night and day for us, telling me that I seemed to look upon all servants as mere bundles of muscles, without for one moment thinking that the poor things had a heart as well as I had; to which I, with my usual satire, answered—"Did I! then it only showed how much he knew about it."

As soon as Mr. Sk—n—st—n had left the house, and I had seen him well off, I just slipt on my bonnet and shawl, and stept round to dear mother's, to ask the good soul for some of her valuable advice under the painful circumstances.

Dear mother said she was truly gratified to find me flying to her bosom in my moments of peril, and told me, with beautiful affection, that she only lived for me and my father's business now; though what with her duty to me and my husband, my coming to her did place her so awkwardly, that she really felt as if she was between two fires, and if she turned her face to one, she would have the other on her back. She said it all amounted to this—If she rowed in the same boat as myself, and went against Edward, she must run him down in my presence, which would pain her much to do; or else she must throw me overboard, and sink her own child in order to find favour in Mr. Sk—n—st—n's eyes; so that I must see what a trying position hers was, and how wrong it was of me, as matters stood, to ask her to express any opinion upon my husband's shameful, indecent, and, she would add, unmanly conduct. Of course, it would never do for her, she said, to tell me that he had behaved to me worse than a savage. But still this she would say, that if *her* husband, my own father, had behaved to *her* one half so brutally as Mr. Sk—n—st—n had to *me*, that she would not have stopped in the house of the monster another moment; and that though he had come after her the very next day, begging and praying of her to return—as of course he would—still she would have turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties, and insisted upon having a handsome separate maintenance from the wretch, and never willingly have set eyes upon him again. Not that she wished me to understand that she was conselling me to do anything of the kind—far from it; for, as she truly observed, she trusted she knew herself too well to be in any way instrumental to the separation of husband and wife; as it must be very clear to me, she added, that if through anything she said, I might be induced to pack up whatever dresses and jewellery Mr. Sk—n—st—n had presented me with, and leave my ungrateful husband for ever, that maybe, when my dear little innocent babe was born, I might repent of my rash step, and visit her with it. This, she told me, she felt would be a dreadful punishment to

her, and a return, indeed, that she little dreamt of. So she really must again beg and pray to be allowed to remain perfectly neutral in the business; especially as from the insight she had had into Mr. Sk—n—st—n's character of late, she was sure that he would not act towards me as he ought, but would settle on me an allowance that would scarcely procure me the common necessaries of life. And how I was to live then, she would not attempt to say.

Concerning Norah, however, she said it was quite a different thing, and that she felt no such delicacy about taking that matter in hand, as, from the experience she had had in the management of servants, (which, of course, Mr. Sk—n—st—n could not possibly understand anything about, or he would have known that kindness was utterly thrown away upon the creatures,) she flattered herself that she would very soon bring the woman to her senses, indeed. So she would slip her things on that very moment, and step round with me to Miss Norah, although I told her that she was too good to me, and that I was afraid that I was riding the willing horse to death when I saddled her with the baggage.

When we reached our cottage *orné*, I allowed dear mother to go down into the kitchen by herself, thinking it best not to interfere between her and that spitfire of a Norah, as there was no knowing what the consequences might be. I shouldn't think she could have been away five minutes, when up she came rushing into the room, with her face as white as the head of a cauliflower, and all of a tremble, just like steamboat. As soon as she had recovered her breath, (which indeed, has been bad for these many years past,) she declared that it was quite a mercy she had even been able to escape with her life up the kitchen stairs, as she never had stood face to face with such a fury in all her born days before; for directly she told the woman that she ought to be ashamed of herself for the way in which she had treated so kind a mistress, and that, for her part, she only wished that she had the management of her, and she would take good care to rule her with a rod of iron,—when, no sooner had she said as much, than the dragon screamed out, "A rod of iron, is it?" and snatching up the heavy kitchen poker, swore that, by the powers, if mother didn't lave the kitchen directly, she would crack her ugly ould nob for her like a cocoa-nut, saying the likes of her had no rights in the kitchen at all at all, and she'd tache her not to put her foot in it agin. Then she twisted about the great kitchen poker over her head, and began capering and screaming away, and then, giving vent to a horrible oath, the fury flew after poor dear mother, and followed her half way up the kitchen stairs; and mother said she really believed if the vixen could have caught hold of her, that she would have been a melancholy corpse that moment—adding, that if she were me, she would go down stairs that very minute, and turn the blood-thirsty tigress out of the house, neck and crop. When I very properly observed, that as she had so kindly undertaken the management of the creature for me, I felt I should not like to take it out of her hands, she said that as Norah Connor seemed to object very naturally to her interference, she would have nothing more to do with her—as, upon second thoughts, it certainly was no place of hers.

When my mother found that I was determined not to have anything more to do with Miss Norah, she said that if I chose to let the fury remain in the house, I must abide by the consequences, and that if the spiteful creature poisoned the whole family, I must not blame her. Indeed, the woman was clearly so mad about leaving, that mother would stake her existence that it wouldn't be long before the vixen gave us such a dose of arsenic—either in the pudding, the soup, or the vegetables, or something—as would put a miserable end to both Edward and myself. And I declare dear mother frightened me so by what she said, that I really couldn't get the arsenic out of my head for weeks.

Edward only laughed at me for my suspicions, and called me a stupid woman, and pooh-poohed me in a most unfeeling manner. But the worst of it was, that though he assured me he knew the disposition of Norah Connor better than I did, still everything conspired to convince me that I was a *doomed woman*—for the very day dear mother had filled my mind with the horrid idea, I declare, if I didn't knock down the looking glass off the dressing-room table and break it all to shivers, which of course fully persuaded me that a death must shortly occur in the family. And again, one evening, after tea, when I was sitting by the fire with dear Edward, if as perfect a coffin as ever I saw in all my life didn't jump out from between the bars, and fell upon the hearth-rug just close to my feet, while

upon turning round, who can imagine my horror when I saw hanging to the side of the candle one of the clearest winding-sheets that I think I ever beheld.

I now perceived that there was no escape for me; for though the looking-glass might mean any one in the family, and the coffin was quite as near Edward as myself, still, alas! there was no mistaking the winding-sheet, for it pointed right at me, and said, as plainly as it could speak, "CAROLINE SK—N—ST—N, BEWARE!" so that, when I put the looking-glass, and the coffin, and the winding-sheet together, I wished any body but myself would stand in my shoes, for it was clear that I had already got one foot in the grave.

All this took such a hold of my mind, and I could see the finger of fate pointing at me so plainly, that I declare I hadn't courage to eat any thing for weeks, and so lost, by my foolish fears, many excellent good dinners; for, indeed, I derived my chief nourishment from common penny buns—and which really had so little in them to satisfy me, that I declare I have very often eaten as many as fourteen a day—though in the end I really found that I was falling away rapidly; for my fair readers must be fully aware that it is utterly impossible to keep body and soul together with penny buns. And I declare I had such a surfeit of the puffy blown-out things, that really I have never been able to bear the sight of them since.

And thus I went on, starving myself to death by inches, until one day, Edward, having won a cause, dined at Westminster with the witnesses; and then if a dog in the street didn't keep howling and crying all the evening, like any thing—just opposite our house. When my husband returned, he let out, quite by accident, whilst I was asking him about what they had given him for dinner, that there were thirteen at table! This completely quieted my fears, for I now plainly saw that all the dreadful omens pointed at my husband and not at myself, while the simple fact of the dog howling all the time the thirteen were at dinner, completely convinced me that I was destined before long to *wear weeds*.

The next day—as I now saw Fate had singled out its victim, and that my dear Edward, and not myself, was doomed to be the melancholy martyr of Miss Norah's poisonous designs—I thought I might as well make a good dinner for the first time these three weeks—though, with my usual prudence, I determined to get some favourite dish for my poor husband, so that he might enjoy it all to himself, and so that I might not be called upon to partake of the same food as he did. But, that day, thank goodness, Edward delighted me by bringing home one of his country agents, a Mr. Fl—m—ng, to dinner with him; so I at once saw that, as I carved, I should have an opportunity of trying the effect of the different dishes upon the visitor before allowing my dear husband to peril his precious life by partaking of them. For as I had to choose whether Edward, who is a tolerably good husband, or Fl—m—ng, who is far from a profitable agent, should fall a victim to Norah's spite, of course I could not help preferring the lesser evil, and sacrificing my guest in order to save my spouse. So I took good care, all through dinner, that directly my Edward expressed a wish to taste such and such a dish, to prevail upon Mr. Fl—m—ng to try some of the same before I allowed my husband to touch it, in order that I might observe what effect it had upon him, poor man, before helping my dear Edward. But with all my care, nothing would satisfy my self-willed husband, of course, but some of the very veal cutlets that I'd had cooked for myself, and which I'd made a point of not asking Mr. Fl—m—ng to touch, in order that I might have them all to myself; so that there was I obliged, after all, to make my dinner off potatoes and cheese.

Indeed, all that week—which, thank heavens, was to be the last of Norah Connor's stay with us—I took care always to have a friend to dinner; so that, by this innocent *ruse de guerre*, I might keep my husband at least out of danger. And so, thank goodness, I did; though, as it turned out, I had only been starving myself upon penny buns, and trembling at every meal for the life of Mr. Sk—n—st—n, all to no good at all; for I verily believe now, from the way in which Norah parted with us, and the sorrow she showed at so doing, that the poor woman really was too much attached to us by half ever to dream of putting an end to us in so unfeeling a manner.

When the day came for her to go, I declare the poor thing was dreadfully cut up, and cried like a child; for she said she knew what I had suspected her of, and told me, in quite a touching way, that "maybe her timper was warrm, but still,

by the powers, it wasn't Norah that would iver in cowld blood harrm the hair of my head, and that she wouldn't have tould me she was Cornwall, sure, hadn't she known that to say she came from Ould Ireland was like taking the blissed brid from her mouth, and sartin to make me and my counthry people turn our backs upon her, for sure and weren't the Saxons always puttin' at the bottom of their adver-*tyze*-mints, No Irish need apply."

We parted the best of friends, and I gave the poor, honest, hard-working, open-hearted creature, either five shillings or half-a-crown, (I can't exactly say which now,) though I'm nearly certain it was the larger sum, and for a quarter-of-an-hour at least she stood on the door-step and did nothing but call me her mavourneen, and macree, and a quantity of other outlandish names, and kept invoking blessings on my head, and sobbing away as though she really *had* got, as Edward said, a heart to break.

CHAPTER VII.

OF MY PRETTY MAID, AND THOSE DREADFUL SOLDIERS WHO WOULD COME TURNING HER HEAD, AND PREVENTING THE POOR THING DOING HER WORK.

"Heigho! heigho! I'm afraid,
Too many lovers will puzzle a maid."
"YOUNG SUSAN HAD LOVERS SO MANY, THAT SHE," &c.

THE servant who came in after Norah was a young woman whose godfathers and godmothers (stupid people) had christened Rosetta, as if she had been a Duchess. As of course I wasn't going to have any of my menials answering to a stuck-up name like that, I gave her to understand that I should allow no such things in *my* house, indeed, but would take the liberty of altering pretty Rosetta into plain Susan. She was a nice, clean-looking girl, and was—what, I dare say, some persons would call—pretty, for her features were very regular; still it was not my style of beauty. And though her complexion certainly was clear and rosy, still there was too healthy and countrified a look about it to please me; for to be perfectly beautiful, it wanted the interesting air that indisposition always gives the face; for it is universally allowed by all well-bred people that a woman never looks so well as when she appears to be suffering from bad health. She had a pair of very fine blue eyes of her own; but I must confess I never was partial to eyes of that colour, for they always seem to me to want the expression of hazel ones. (Dear Edward says mine are hazel.) To do the girl justice, her mouth was the best feature she had in her face, and yet there was something about it—I can't exactly tell what—that wasn't altogether to my liking. Her figure, too, certainly did look very good for a person in *her* station of life; but all my fair readers must be as well aware as I am that things have lately come to *such* a pretty pass, and an excellent *tournure* can be had for *so* little money, that even one's maid-servants can walk into any corset-makers and buy a figure, fit for a lady of the highest respectability, for a mere trifle; and such being the case, of course there is so much imposition about a female's appearance now-a-days, that really it is impossible to tell what is natural and what is not. When the conceited bit of goods came after the situation, she looked *so* clean, tidy, and respectable, and had on *such* a nice plain cotton gown, of only one colour—being a nice white spot on a dark green ground,—and *such* a good, strong, serviceable half-a-crown Dunstable straw bonnet, trimmed very plainly; and *such* a nice clean quilled net-cap under it; and *such* a tidy plain white muslin collar over one of the quietest black-and-white plaid shawls I think I ever saw in all my life, that I felt quite charmed at seeing her dressed *so* thoroughly like what a respectable servant ought to be; and I'm sure I was never so surprised, in all my born days, as when her late mistress (who gave her an excellent character) told me the reason why they parted with Susan was, that she was inclined to be dressy; so that, after what I had seen of the poor girl, I said to myself—Dressy, indeed!—well, if they call her dressy, I should like to know what dressy is! and engaged her, accordingly.

The first Sunday after she had come into the house, however, I found that her late mistress wasn't so far out in the character she had given the minx; for lo and behold! my neat, unpretending chrysalis had changed into a flaunting fal-lal butterfly. For after she had gone up stairs to clean herself that afternoon, if my lady didn't come down dressed out as fine as a sweep on a May-day. Bless us and save us! if the stuck-up thing hadn't got on a fly-a-way starched-out imitation Balzorine gown, of a bright ultramarine, picked out with white flowers—with a double skirt, too, made like a tunic, and looking *so* grand, (though one could easily see that it could not possibly have cost more than six-and-six—if that, indeed,) and drat her impudence! if she hadn't on each side of her head got a bunch of long ringlets, like untwisted bell-ropes, hanging half way down to her waist, and a blonde-lace cap, with cherry-coloured rosettes, and streamers flying about nearly a yard long; while on looking at her feet, if the conceited bit of goods hadn't got on patent leather shoes, with broad sandals, and open-worked cotton stockings, as I'm a living woman—and net mittens on her hands too, as true as my name's Sk—n—st—n. I had her in the parlour pretty soon, for I wanted to ask her who the dickens she took me for. Of course, she was very much surprised that I should object to all her trumpery finery and fiddlefaddle; and she knew as well as I did that the terms I made when I engaged her were—ten pounds a year, find her own tea and sugar, and no followers, nor ringlets, nor sandals, allowed; and that if, in the hurry of the moment, I had omitted to mention the ringlets and sandals, it was an oversight on my part, for which I was very sorry; so I told her that I would thank her to go up stairs again, and take that finery off her back as quickly as she could, and never, as long as she remained under my roof, to think of appearing before me in such a disgraceful state again. When she went out that afternoon to church, the girl had made herself look something decent, and was no longer dressed out as showily as if she was the mistress instead of the maid.

Indeed, this love of dress seemed to be quite a mania with the girl; for I am sure the stupid thing must have gone spending every penny of her wages upon her back. And do what I would, I couldn't prevent the conceited peacock from poking her nasty, greasy bottles of rose hair-oil and filthy combs and brushes all among the plates and dishes over the dresser. And I declare, upon looking in the drawer of the kitchen table one morning, while she was making the beds up stairs, if I didn't stumble upon a trumpery sixpenny copy of "The Hand-Book of the Toilet," which soon told me that the dirty messes I had been continually finding in all the saucepans, were either some pomatum, or cream, or wash, which she had been making for her face or hands. And a day or two afterwards, while I was down stairs seeing about the dinner, if the precious beauty hadn't the impudence to tell me that she wished to goodness that her "hibrows met like mine did, for it was considered very handsome by the hancients;" and in a few minutes afterwards, the dirty puss informed me that the Hand-Book of the Tilet said that you ought to clean your teeth every morning, and that she had lately tried it, and had no hidea that it was so hagreable; and then, with the greatest coolness imaginable, if she didn't advise *me* to rub my gums with salt hevery night before I went to bed; for that the lady of rank and fashion who, she said, was the talented hauthoress of the little work, declared that it made your gums look uncommon lovely and red. On which I told her that I was disgusted to find her head filled with such a heap of rubbish as it was.

But really the stupid girl's vanity carried her to such lengths, that she was silly enough to allow any man to go falling in love with her who liked, although I must say that I don't think there was any harm in the minx. Still it was by no means pleasant to have a pack of single knocks continually coming and turning the poor thing's head on your doorstep—so that it was really one person's time to be popping out of the parlour and telling the girl to come in directly, and not stand chatting there with the door in her hand. But when she found that my vigilance had put an end to her courtships on my doorstep, she soon discovered another means of corresponding with her admirers in the neighbourhood. For one morning, when I went into the back bedroom to put out some clean pillow-cases, and I happened to go to the window for a moment, I was never so astonished in the whole course of my existence as when I saw that impudent monkey of a footman belonging to the S—mm—ns's (whose house is just at the bottom

of our garden) holding up a tea-tray, on the back of which was written, in large chalk letters, "HANGEL, CAN I CUM TO TEE;" and I immediately saw what the fellow meant by his tricks; so I crept down stairs as gently as I could, and in the back parlour I found, just as I had expected, my precious beauty of a Susan perched on a chair, and holding up my best japanned tea-tray—that cost me I don't know what all—and on the back she had written with the same elegant writing materials—"HADOORED ONE! YOU CARNT CUM—ALAS! MISSUS WILL BE HIN." So I scolded her well for carrying on those games, and daring to chalk her nasty love-letters on my tea-trays, telling her that hers were pretty goings on and fine doings indeed.

And really if it hadn't been for Edward's aversion to changing, I do believe I should have packed her out of the house—as indeed I wish I had—then and there; for the way in which she went on towards me really was enough to make a saint swear, (though I'm happy to say I did not.) For, in the first place, the reader should know that I'm more particular about my caps than any other article of dress. Indeed, I do think, that of all things, a pretty cap is the most becoming thing a married woman can wear; and if I can only get them *distingué*, (as we say,) I don't mind what expense I go to, especially as it is so easily made up out of the house-keeping by giving my husband a few tarts less every week, and managing the house as prudently and for as little money as I possibly can. But I declare, no sooner did I get a new cap to my head, and one that I flattered myself was quite out of the common, than as sure as the next Sunday came round, that impudent stuck up bit of goods of a Miss Susan would make a point of appearing in one of the very same shape and trimming—only, of course, made of an inferior and cheaper material; and though I kept continually changing mine, as often as the housekeeping would admit of my doing so, still it was of no use at all; for the girl was so quick with her needle and thread, that she could unpick hers and make it up again like mine for a few pence; and the consequence was, that any party who had seen either of us only once or twice, would be safe to mistake one for the other—which I suppose was her ambition. This got me nicely insulted, indeed! for one day, after having had a very nice luncheon of two poached eggs and a basin of some delicious mutton broth, together with a glass of Guinness's bottled stout, I got up and went to look at the window; and I was standing there with my head just over the blinds, when the policeman came sauntering by, and seeing me—I declare if the barefaced monkey didn't turn his head round and wink at me! I never was so horrified in all my life; for of course I couldn't tell what on earth the man could mean by behaving in such a low, familiar way towards *me*; and as I remained riveted with astonishment to the spot, I saw him stop after he had gone a few paces past the house, and—I never knew such impudence in all my born days!—begin kissing his hand as if he wanted to make love to me. So I shook my fist at him pretty quickly; but the jack-a-napes only grinned; and putting an inquiring look on his face, pointed down to our kitchen window, and made signs with his hands as if he were cutting up something and putting it into his mouth, and eating it. So I very soon saw that my fine gentleman was mistaking me for that stupid, soft, fly-a-way minx of mine down stairs, and only wanted to come paying his pie-crust addresses to Miss Susan and *my* provisions. So I determined to let him know who I was, indeed; and went to the street door to show myself, and just take his number, and have the fellow well punished for his impertinent goings on; but no sooner did the big whiskered puppy see me, than he went off in a hurry, like a rocket, as fast as his legs could carry him. When I had up Miss Susan, and questioned her as to whether she had ever given the man any encouragement, she told me a nice lot of taradiddles, I could see by her manner, which put me in such a passion, that I declared if ever I caught her making up her caps like mine again, I'd throw them right behind the kitchen fire—that I would.

Though, really, when I came to reflect, in my calm moments, upon the girl's conduct, there was every excuse to be made for the poor ignorant thing; for being cursed, as the philosopher says, with—what some people would have called—a pretty face, and having been only a year or so up from the country, it was but natural that the silly creature should have been tickled by the flattery of the pack of fellows who, to my great horror, were continually running after her; for what with the young men in the neighbourhood, and what with those dreadful barracks in

Albany Street, I declare if our house wasn't completely besieged with the girl's lovers. I do verily believe, so long as that good-looking puss remained with us, that from morning till night we had one of the soldiers walking up and down in front of our door, just like a sentinel—for, upon my word, as fast as one went away, another used to come, for all the world as if they were relieving guard in St. James's Park; and really and truly, the whole of my valuable time was taken up either in answering single knocks, and telling them for about the hundredth time Mr. Smith did not live there, or else in pulling up the windows, and ordering the vagabonds to go along with them, and mind their own business.

And here let me pause for a minute to remark upon the shameful nuisance that those barracks in Albany Street are to all persons living in that otherwise quiet and pretty neighbourhood—for I'm sure there's not a person whose house is within half a mile of the dreadful place that isn't wherrited out of their lives by them. Upon my word, the Life Guardsmen there are so frightfully handsome, that they ought not to be allowed by government to wander at large in those fascinating red jackets, and with those large jet-black mustachios of theirs, sticking out on each side of their face, just like two sticks of Spanish liquorice—nor be permitted to go about as they do, breaking, or at least cracking, the hearts of all the poor servant-girls in the neighbourhood, as if they were so much crockery. And what on earth the hearts of the good-looking wretches themselves can be made of is more than I can say; for either they must be as impenetrable to Cupid's arrows as bags of sand, or I'm sure else they must be as full of holes as a rushlight-shade. I don't know what the regiment may cost the nation every year, (but of course it's no trifling sum, and what they do for it except make love to the maids, I can't see)—but this I do know for a positive fact, that the expense the Life Guardsmen are to the respectable inhabitants of Albany Street and its neighbourhood is actually frightful; for they seem to be of opinion that love cannot live on air, and consequently always begin by paying their addresses to the cooks, and if the larder be good, I will do them the justice to say, that their constancy is wonderful; and really the sum they cost poor Albany Street and its surrounding districts in the matter of cold meat alone is really so dreadful, that I really do think if a petition were got up, and the case properly represented to government, the Paymaster of the Forces could not refuse to make them a large allowance every year for the excellent rations served out to the soldiers every day by the maids. Really the amiable fellows' appetites seem to be as large as their hearts—and *they* are as big as the Waterloo omnibuses, Heaven knows, and will carry fourteen inside with perfect ease and comfort any day. Talk about locusts in the land—I'd back a regiment of Life Guardsmen for eating a respectable district out of house and home in half the time, for positively the fine-looking vagabonds seem to have nothing else to do but to walk about Albany Street, looking down every area like so many dealers in hare and rabbit skins, crying out—"Any affection or cold meat this morning, cook?" I don't know if any of my courteous readers have ever been in Albany Street when the bugle is sounded for the fellows to return to their barracks, but upon my word the scene is really heartbreaking to housekeepers, for there isn't an area down the whole street but from which you will see a Life Guardsman, with his mouth full, ascending the steps, and hurrying off to his quarters for the night. Anybody will agree with me that one Don Giovanni is quite enough to turn the fair heads of a whole parish; but upon my word, when a whole regiment of them are suddenly let loose upon one particular locality, the havoc among the hearts is positively frightful; and there isn't a man in the Life Guards, I know, (unless he's afflicted with red mustachios,) that isn't a regular six foot two Lothario. Besides, Mrs. Lockley, the wife of one of Edward's best clients, assures me that there was one fascinating monster of a Life Guardsman who, the day after his regiment was quartered in Albany Street barracks, began bestowing his affections on the cook at the bottom of the street, near Trinity Church, and loved all up the right-hand side of the way, and then commenced loving down the left; and she says, she verily believes the amiable villain would have got right to the bottom of the street again, had he not been stopped by the Colosseum—so that the wretch was actually obliged to remain constant to the cook who lived at the house next to it for upwards of a month, at an expense of at least a guinea a-week to the master, and half-a-crown to the cook, for tobacco, for the gallant servant-killer.

But to return to that poor simpleton, Susan. One day, Mr. Sk—n—st—n having been obliged to go down to those bothering Kingston Assizes, upon professional business, I was, of course, left all alone, with Susan in the house; and really, from the loneliness of the neighbourhood, and the savage looks of those dreadful soldiers, whom I could not keep away from the place, it had such a dreadful effect upon my nerves, that I got quite stupid and frightened, and kept fancying I heard people trying to open our street door with false keys, and others attempting to break in at the back. So I made up my mind, when it was just close upon eight o'clock, that I wouldn't sit there trembling any longer, and told that girl Susan to eat her supper directly, but on no account to touch the remains of that delicious beefsteak-pie, as I'd set my heart upon having it cold for dinner to-morrow,—for really, I do think it is as nice a dish as one can eat,—and lock up the doors, and get ready to go to bed. And when she had done so, I went down, and having satisfied myself that the house was all safe, saw little Miss Mischief of a Susan up stairs before me; and as I thought there was something odd about her conduct, I saw her into bed, and took the key of her room, and locked her in.

I don't think I could have been in bed myself above half-an-hour, when just as I was dozing off into a nice, comfortable sleep, I was roused by our area bell going cling-a-ling-ling so gently, that I at once knew something was in the wind somewhere. In about five minutes, there was another pull, louder than the first, and in about three minutes after that, another. So I jumped out of bed, and slipping on my wrapper, threw up the window, when lo and behold! there was one of those plaguy Life Guardsmen waiting to be let in at our area gate. "Who's there?" I cried, pretty loudly.

"It's only me, my charmer!" he answered, in a loud whisper.

"Who are you, and what do you want here at this time of night?" I demanded.

"Come, that's a good 'un, after asking me to supper with you," he replied. "Come down, I tell you. It's only Ned Twist, of the Guards.—How about that cold beefsteak-pie, my heart's idol!"

"Go along about your business," I said, in a loud voice. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself—you ought."

"Come, none of your jokes," he replied; "I am so plaguy hungry. I'm good for the whole of that pie of your missus's; so come down, and let us in, there's a beauty."

"Go along with you, do!" I said, in a very loud voice, "or I'll call the police."

"Hush-sh-sh!" he said, in a whisper, "or you'll be letting that old she-dragon of a missus of yours hear you, and then it will be all up with my beefsteak-pie, angel! And that will never do, for I've just refused a splendid offer of tripe and onions from a lovely cook in Osnaburgh-street. So, once for all, do you mean to come down or not?—or I shall have that angel's tripe all cold before I get back to her."

"Go along with you!" I cried out, unable to contain myself any longer, now I had heard all he had got to say—"go along with you—I'am that she-dragon of a mistress, and if you are not off, I'll give you in custody——"

But the words were scarcely out of my mouth, before Mr. Ned Twist ran away as fast as his legs would carry him; and as he turned the corner, I caught a glimpse of the handsome fellow's face by the gaslight, and knew that he was one of the very men who were always coming and asking if Mr. Smith lived there.

In the morning, when I inquired of Miss Susan whether she was acquainted with one Ned Twist, in the Life Guards, of course she knew nothing about the gentleman; and, unfortunately, I had forgotten to wheedle out of the man the name of the party he really had come to see, so that I could not fix her with anything positive.

But I determined to clear up all doubts about the matter, and so I set a trap, into which my lady fell, and I caught her as nicely as ever she was caught in the whole course of her life. I told her that I was going round to dear mother's, to tea, (though of course I never intended to be silly enough to do anything of the kind;) and accordingly I left the house, and went to make a few little odd purchases in the neighbourhood, and then returned in about an hour's time, saying

that, unfortunately, mother was from home, (though, for the matter of that, I didn't know whether she was or not.) It was very easy to see that my lady was quite flustered at my coming back so unexpectedly. Of course I went straight into the parlour, and told her to bring me up the tea-things, and then I shouldn't want her any more; for I wasn't going to be such a simpleton as to go down then, as I felt convinced that directly she heard my knock at the door she had stowed away her gallant son of Mars in the coal-cellar. Just as I had expected, the tea things came up in about half-an-hour. When she brought them, I pretended to be fast asleep on the sofa, and about five minutes after she had put them on the table, I crept down stairs so softly that I declare I could scarcely hear my own footstep; and on opening the door suddenly, as if I wanted to go to the wine-cellar, lo, and behold! there my Life Guardsman was, true enough, and as far as I could judge, Mr. Ned Twist himself—and though all the things had been cleared away, still from the gravy and bits of pie-crust that were hanging to the fellow's mustachios, I could see that my gentleman had been at *my* beef-steak pie with a vengeance. Miss Susan, however, was far from losing her presence of mind, and was even with me in a minute; for she rose from her chair, and introduced me to Mr. Ned Twist, saying, "My cousin, Mam," while her cousin (pretty cousin, indeed!) jumped to the other side of the room, and drawing himself as straight up as a six-foot rule, put his hand sideways to his forehead, as a mark of respect to the mistress of his *relation* (I can't bear such deceit!) As he was a great tall man, and I was a poor lone woman, with my husband in the country, I thought it best to be civil to the good-looking monster, (though I could have given it him well, I could!) so I begged of him not to disturb himself, but to sit down quietly, and make himself quite at home with his *cousin*. Then I went up stairs, and putting on my bonnet and shawl, slipped out of the house as quick as I could—though, bother take it, I couldn't get the street-door to close after me without making a noise. Then I went up to the first policeman I met with, and told him he must come with me that instant, as I wanted to give a man in charge for robbing me of my beef-steak pie. But on going back, the bird had flown; so I had to offer the policeman my thanks and a glass of table-beer,—which however, the good man would not accept, saying that they were forbidden to drink while on duty. I was so surprised at finding such virtue in the police force—especially when I recollected how I had been treated by that big-whiskered monkey—who had winked at me, that I took a good look at this noble man, and at once knew from the quantity of hair about the jackanapes' face that he was the identical fellow who had not only kissed his hand to me, but had also wanted himself to partake of whatever there might be in my larder. So I sent him off with a flea in his ear; and then turning round sharp upon Miss Susan, I told her that she would go that day month, as sure as her name was Susan, and that I hoped and trusted she would let this be a warning to her—for I knew very well that I could easily pretend to make it up with her again, and so keep her on a month or six weeks after my confinement.

The next day I received a very proper letter from Edward, informing me he was afraid that business would detain him at Kingston for another week, and a very unladylike and rude letter from Mrs. Yapp, the mother of Edward's poor dear deceased first wife, telling my husband she would be in town to-morrow, and that she purposed making her dear boy's house her home so long as she remained in London.

Oh, gracious goodness! I said to myself, what will my poor husband do under this awful visitation? for if one mother-in-law is more than he can bear, what on earth will he do when he finds himself afflicted with two?—and the worst of it all was, that I saw that during my confinement—but, alas! I must reserve this for another chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH TREATS OF MRS. YAPP, MRS. B—FF—N, MRS. TOOSYPEGS, LITTLE MISS SK—N—ST—N, AND FLY-AWAY MISS SUSAN.

"It was one winter's day, about six in the morn,
When my little innocent creature was born;
There were doctor, and nurse, and a great many more,
But none of them saw such a baby before."
POPULAR SONG.

MRS. YAPP's threatened visit took such a hold of me, that I felt myself quite driven up in a corner; and the worst of it was, I saw no way of getting out of it with any decency. Though I couldn't for the life of me understand what claim she had upon my husband's hospitality, now that it had pleased Providence in its bountiful mercy to take his first wife from him—and looking at it as I did, it did seem to me to be very like her impudence indeed in calling my husband her "dear boy," since her daughter had been dead and gone a good two years at least. Besides, of course, *I* was a mere nobody—*I* was—and not worth even so much as the mentioning in her letter, for her coming couldn't put *me* out in the least—oh no! And what would my lady care if it did, for it was very clear *I* was nothing to her—not *I*, indeed! and as to whether it was convenient *for me* to receive her or not, that was the last thing thought of; for if she turned us all topsy-turvy, and left us without so much as a leg to stand upon, what would it matter to her, so long as *she* was all right and comfortable, and could get her bed and board for nothing—for that was at the bottom of it, I could see—a mean old thing! Making her dear boy's house her home too!—her *home*, indeed!—her hotel, more likely; and she has got four hundred a-year long annuities. Sooner than *I*'d be guilty of such meanness, I declare, upon my word and honour, I'd take the first broom I could get, and sweep the very first crossing I came to.

Still, under the circumstances, it was very clear that it would never do to slam the door in her face, when she came to us, though, I declare, I felt as if nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to have done so; for really I don't know anything more uncomfortable than to be obliged to go bowing and scraping, and saying a lot of civil things to a creature, when all the time you're wishing to yourself that she was safe at the bottom of the sea—as every lady with her proper feelings about her knows she has been obliged to do scores and scores of times. Of course, Mrs. Yapp would be professing all kinds of love for her "dear boy," and be continually crying up to the skies his beloved first wife, and she would naturally expect me to go sympathizing with the poor dear, when really and truly I didn't care two pins about the thing. And it is so unpleasant to a right-minded female like myself, to be forced to take out one's handkerchief, and play the crocodile about a bit of goods that one had never been a penny the better for. Of course, too, she would pretend to be so delighted to make my acquaintance, and unable to make enough of me to my face, though, directly my back was turned, she would go picking me to pieces like anything. Augh! I do detest deceit.

However, thank goodness, the next day's post brought a letter directed to Edward, which being in a woman's handwriting, I naturally opened, and found to my delight that Mrs. Yapp regretted to say that she couldn't be with "her pet" until that day week; so that, as Edward was coming home on the Thursday, he could receive the old thing himself, and take that load off my hands at any rate.

Well, on the Thursday home came Edward. Directly I heard his knock, I snatched up a duster and began rubbing down the hall chairs, so that he might not find a speck of dust in the house on his return; and I was quite glad to see that my exertions were not thrown away upon him, for he told me, that it was very wrong of me in my state to go fatiguing myself in that way, and that he wished I would make the servant do it. On which I said that if he expected Susan to take any pride about the look of the furniture, he was mightily mistaken, and he would find himself eaten up alive in less than no time, if I wasn't continually slaving myself to death for him as I was.

Edward was in quite a good humour, for he had won his cause like a clever lawyer, as he certainly is, though, as he said, all the facts, and the law, and jus-

tice of the case, were dead against him. So, when I broke to him the impending calamity of Mrs. Yapp's visit, he took it much better than I had expected, for he laughed and said he should like to see how old Mother Yapp and Mrs. B--ff—n would get on with one another; for he expected they would come together like two highly charged thunder-clouds, and go off with a tremendous explosion, which would have the effect of clearing the air of his house, so that he would be left in a perfect heaven. And then the jocular monster tittered, and said that if he had been doomed to have only one mother-in-law, it was clear that he must have ended his days in a mad-house, but that as Providence had blessed him with two, he was as happy as a man who had married an orphan; for as mothers-in-law were the invariable negatives of domestic happiness, it was clear that two of them must make his home an affirmative paradise; adding that one was the poison and the other the antidote, so that, thank Heaven, now, if at any time he was suffering from an over-dose of mother-in-law B—ff—n, he had only to make up his mind to swallow a little of mother-in-law Yapp, and he would be all right again in no time; for the bitter alkali of the one would correct the acidity of the other, and drive off the dreadful effects of both in a twinkling. Then he went on giggling and railing at mothers-in law in general, and at my dear mother, and the mother of his first wife in particular, till I lost all patience with him; for he declared that a whole avalanche of treatises had been written on the origin of evil, and a mountain of rubbish shot into the British Museum about the cause of sorrow in this world; but it was very plain, and he had no doubt about it himself, that misery first came in with mothers-in-law, who he considered to have been sent on earth to try the resignation of Man, and to prevent the over-population of the world, by setting them up as warnings to persons about to marry — in the same way as the horrors of dyspepsia and gout were designed, simply as a means of keeping persons from the excesses of the table. It was all very well to talk about Job's extraordinary patience, but what he wanted to know was, had Job ever been scourged with a mother-in-law; because, if not, it was very clear that his powers of endurance had not been taxed to the full. And he had the wickedness to say, that it was all a pack of rubbish and a cruel imposition for the law to declare that a man couldn't marry his grandmother — or his mother — or his wife's mother — or his wife's sister — for the plain truth was, that when a man married a woman, he married the whole family. But I couldn't put up with him any longer, when he protested, that if he had his way, he would have an act passed for the total abolition of all mothers-in-law, and insert a clause, that whenever a couple were joined together in holy matrimony, immediately after the wedding breakfast, the mother of the bride should offer herself up as a willing sacrifice, to perfect the happiness of the bridegroom, in the same way as the Hindoo widows immolated themselves out of regard to the husband. On which I very properly told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself to talk in that way of those poor benighted savages, and I begged that he would hold his tongue if he couldn't find anything better to talk about, saying that his trip out of town seemed to have turned his head; and asking him how he himself would like what he had proposed, if, supposing I was to be blessed with a daughter, and had to be put out of the way when she got married, all for the sake of completing the happiness, as he called it, of some big-whiskered fellow, that I didn't care twopence about. But it was useless speaking to him, for he only said that he should be delighted to see me setting so good an example.

As I saw that my gentleman was in one of his teasing, facetious moods, I thought it best to turn the conversation, which I very cleverly did by asking him what kind of a woman Mrs. Yapp was, when he burst out laughing again, assuring me that she was a very nice woman, only she was too fond of her medicine-bottle, and was dreadfully addicted to doctor's stuff; for she took pills as if they were green peas, and seemed to have as strong a penchant for powders as other people had for snuff. And he considerably alarmed me by saying that the worst of it was, she had a strange conviction that all her friends stood as much in need of medicine as she did, as she was never happy unless she could prevail upon some one to try some of her filthy potions or lotions, and which she always would have it were just the things one wanted; and really she herself had swallowed so much rhubarb, and senna, and camomile, in her time, that she had a complexion for all the world like a Margate slipper, although she would

tell you, that if it wasn't for what she had taken, she would never have had a bit of colour in her cheeks. When she came up to town last time, she wouldn't let Edward drink a drop of tea; for she would insist that the green was made up of verdigris, and that the black was all coloured with lead, and that the only way to ensure a long life was to take two or three cups of good strong nettle or dandelion for breakfast every morning, and which, she said, she highly recommended for family use. He cautioned me, however, above all things, never to allow her to persuade me to try any of her nostrums, for that he verily believed she had physicked her daughter into an early grave, and that if I allowed her to go playing any pranks with the very fine constitution I have of my own, I should find that her powder and pills would bring me down as safe as powder and shot. So I told him that he wouldn't catch me taking any of her messes, and I hoped and trusted that he would get her out of the house as soon as ever he possibly could.

At length, the day arrived for my lady's coming, and Edward would have me get a nice little dinner ready for her. So I warmed up some of the pea-soup we had left the day before, and which was as nice as any I had ever tasted; and then I thought a sweet, tender, juicy steak, well stewed, with a good thick gravy, would be as delicious a thing as she could well sit down to — indeed, I'm very partial to it myself — and with three or four pork chops, well browned, with the kidney in them, just to put at the end of the table, and a sweet little plum-pudding, with brandy sauce, to face me, and a few custards opposite Edward, and after that, just a mouthful of macaroni, with a little cheese grated over it, and a stick or two of celery to follow—I fancied it would be a very nice dinner for her, and one that I felt I could enjoy myself.

Bother take it! Edward would make me go dancing all the way down to the Regent's Circus, just to meet Mrs. Yapp when she came by the coach, though, as I said at the time, it would seem as if we were too glad to see her. However, as my husband, I regret to say, never will listen to reason, I had to put on my bonnet, and go to the expense of a cab, just to please his foolish whim; and after that, to stand in the coach-office like a ninny, waiting for the stage to come in. When it did, I went up to a middle-aged lady, who looked as bilious as a bar of yellow soap, and asked her, with a pleasing smile, "whether her name happened to be Yapp?" But she looked at me very suspiciously, and said, "It was no such thing." And then I tried everybody else, but no Mrs. Yapp could I find; so, after all, drat it, I had to jump into the cab again, and get home as fast as I could: and there was three-and-sixpence for cab-hire literally and truly thrown away in the dirt, (which wasn't coming out of the housekeeping, I could tell Mr. Sk—n—st—n,) besides a dinner good enough for an emperor positively wasted; for Mr. Edward must needs be so clever, that he would have I had made some mistake, and insisted upon the dinner being thrown back for an hour and a half at least; though I declare I was so hungry after my ride, and the very smell of it was so tantalizing, that I was ready to eat the ends of my fingers off. When it did come up, of course it was all as dry as a chip, without so much as a drop of gravy: and if there is one thing, to me, worse than another, it is a rump-steak stewed till it is quite dry. There was the macaroni, too, which I had set my heart upon, all spoilt, so that it was, for all the world, like eating bits of wax-taper. And I told Edward, pretty plainly, that I wouldn't give a thank you for my dinner at that time of night, but would sooner have a mouthful of something with my tea; for I do think that when a body is worn out with the fatigues of the day, and one has gone past one's regular hour for one's meals,—I do think, I say, that a nice strong cup of warm tea, with a pinch or two of green in it, is better than all the dinners in the world put together in a heap; for it does revive one so, if one can only get it good, (which I find a great difficulty now-a-days, though I pay six shillings a pound for every spoonful that I use;) besides, I declare I'd sooner go without my dinner than my tea, any day; and I am sure all my fair readers must be of the same way of thinking as myself.

But let me see,—where was I? Oh, I remember: I had left off at our dinner. Well! as I was saying, our miserable, dried-up repast, could scarcely have gone down stairs, and Susan was just sweeping the crumbs off the tablecloth, when I heard a hackney-coach draw up at our door, and, lo and behold! who should it contain but that bothering Mrs. Yapp who had come with three hair trunks, a

portmanteau, two bonnet-boxes, one band ditto, and a bundle, as if she was going to stop a whole twelvemonth with us.

When she came in, I declare upon my word and honour, if she wasn't the very woman, with a complexion like fullers-earth, that I had asked at the coach-office, whether her name was Yapp. And on reminding her of it, she said, she was very sorry for the mistake, but really and truly she had heard so much about the tricks of London people, that she couldn't be expected to go telling her name to the first stranger she met with. So she had thought that the safest plan, to prevent being imposed upon, was to jump with her boxes into a hackney coach, and tell the man to drive her to our house. The fellow, however, had been three hours at least galloping about with her, and had taken her over to Stockwell Park, and Highbury Park, and every other park he could think of, in search of Park Village. For, of course, the man saw that she was fresh from the country, and had determined to make the most of her; so she had to pay upwards of half a sovereign for her suspicions of me (your bilious people are always so suspicious), and which I was heartily glad of.

Of course she was so happy to see her dear boy, "whose house she was going to make her home;" and declared she was delighted to make *my* acquaintance. Edward very imprudently would go inquiring after her health, when immediately off my lady went, and kept us for full half an hour, giving us a whole catalogue of all her illnesses and cures, and telling us how she had discovered a new pill which had really worked miracles with her. As I kept saying, "Indeed," and "Bless me," and "You don't say so," and appearing very interested—though all the time I could have wished her further—she had the impudence to tell me that, as a treat, she would let me have a couple to try on the morrow, for she could plainly see my liver was out of order—though, as I said to myself at the time, I should like to know what my liver was to her, indeed. However, I slipped out of the room to look after Susan and the tray, and made her warm up one of the pork chops, and bring it up with the tea. But no sooner did my lady see it, than she said it would be death to her if she touched it, and before she let me make the tea, she would go and undo one of her boxes in the hall, just to get out a loaf of digestive bread, and a bottle of filthy soda; and if she didn't force me to put half a teaspoonful at least into the pot, telling me that it would correct all the acidity, and make the tea go twice as far—which I can easily understand, as I'm sure neither Edward nor myself could touch it: for I declare it was more like soap-suds than full-flavoured wiry Pekoe. The worst of it was, too, I was obliged to say it "was very nice, I was sure;" and I could see *that* Edward, laughing away in his sleeve at every sip I took. Then she would sit all the evening with her shawl over her shoulders, declaring that the draughts came in at our door enough to cut her in two; and, bother take it, she made me go down stairs and see that the sheets for her bed were well aired—and give orders for a fire to be lighted in her room—and the feather-bed put down before it—and a pan of hot water to be taken up for her at ten precisely—and for a few spoonfuls of brown sugar to be put into the warming-pan with the coals, before warming her bed; adding that, with a good large basin of gruel, and a James's powder in it, she thought she should do for *that* night. And really I should have thought so too. But what pleased me most was, that she said she was putting me to a great deal of trouble. And I should think she was too—though of course I was forced to assure her that she wasn't, and that nothing gave me more pleasure than to be able to assist one with such a bad constitution as she appeared to have of her own. Whereupon she flew at me very spitefully, and told me I was never more mistaken in all my life, for every one that knew her allowed, that if it hadn't been for her very fine constitution, and a score of Morison's Number Two's daily, she should have been in Abraham's bosom long ago; and that I should be a lucky woman if my constitution was half as fine as hers. So as I saw it was useless arguing the point with her, I let her have her own way, and wasn't at all sorry when ten o'clock came, and I had seen her fairly up stairs to her bed-room, where she kept Susan a good three-quarters of an hour at least fiddle-faddleing and tying her flannel petticoat round her head, and tucking her up, and pinning her shawl before the window, and what not.

Next morning, when she came down to breakfast, she told us that she had got

the rheumatism in both her legs so bad, that she had been forced to wrap them up in brown paper, which she said she found to be the best of all remedies, and an infallible cure; and sure enough there she was going about the house with her legs done up for all the world like a pair of new tongs in an ironmonger's shop. All breakfast time, she would tell us how she had made it a duty to try every new cure as fast as it came up, and how she supposed she must have written in her time at least thirty testimonials of wonderful cures effected upon her by different medicines, which, she said, she had since found out had never done her any good at all. At one time, she swore by brandy and salt, and she took so much of it, that, instead of curing her illness, she verily believed she was only curing herself like so much bacon. At another period, she had pinned her faith entirely to cold water, and she was sure she must have swallowed a small river in her time; she had had it pumped upon her too, and sat in it, and bathed in it, and slept in it, she might say, for she went to bed in nothing but damp sheets for a year and more, until really she had washed every bit of colour out of her cheeks; and she felt that if she was to wring her hands, water would run from them like a wet flannel. After that, she had gone raving mad about homœopathy, and had nearly starved herself to death with its finikin infinitesimal doses; for whole weeks she used to take nothing for breakfast but the billionth part of a spoonful of tea in a quart of boiling water, and the ten thousandth part of an ounce of butter to eight sixty-sixths of a quartern loaf; while her dinner had frequently consisted of three ounces and two drachms of the lean of a neck of mutton made into broth with a gallon of water, flavoured with three pennyweights of carrot, and a scruple of greens, and seasoned with two grains and a half of pepper, and the sixteenth of a pinch of salt. Since, however, she had discovered her wonderful pill, she had left all her other specifics, and never felt so well, and consequently so happy, before; and then she pulled out a box, and would make me take a couple of the filthy little things with my tea, saying that they would make me so comfortable and good-tempered, that I should hardly know myself again.

Immediately after the breakfast things had been taken away, I slipt on my things, and stepped round to dear mother's, just to tell her what a dreadful creature we had got in the house, and that I really began to have fears for my life again. When the dear affectionate old lady had heard of Mrs. Yapp's fearful goings-on, she said that it really would not be safe to trust me alone with such a woman during my confinement; and that, as my mother, she insisted upon being allowed to come and sleep in the house, too. Though I told her I didn't know how we were to manage it, unless she consented to take half of Mrs. Yapp's bed, which, I regretted to say, was only a small tent, and it was impossible to say how it would ever be able to hold the pair of them. But the dear, good old soul declared, she didn't mind what hardship she underwent, so long as she was by, to watch over me, and prevent my being poisoned to death by pills, and herbs, and draughts, and such like. I told her, it was very kind indeed of her, and I had no doubt that Mr. Sk—n—st—n would be as grateful to her as I was; and we arranged together that she should sleep in the house that very night.

When I informed Edward of what my mother had so kindly consented to do for me, he began grinning again, and said, that he was delighted to hear it, for that he was sure such a state of things could not last long, and that he should have the pair of them getting together by the ears, and going at it hammer and tongs, and both his dear mothers-in-law leaving the premises in less than a week —thank Heaven! Though when I told him that I didn't know where on earth I could put him to, unless, indeed, I made him up a nice comfortable bed on the sofa in the back drawing-room, with coats and cloaks, and odd things, to cover him—for Mrs. Yapp, I regretted to say, had got all the spare blankets we had —of course he must go flying into a passion again, and said that matters had come to a pretty pass, when a man's mothers-in-law walked into his house, and didn't leave him even a bed to lie upon. And after he had railed against Mrs. B—ff—n and Mrs. Yapp till he was quite out of breath, he got a little better tempered, and said, that as it would be impossible for his two blessed mothers-in-law to sleep in the same bed without falling out, why he didn't mind what amicable arrangement he came to, so long as he could make them enemies for life.

Next day, nurse came; and really she was such a nice, goodnatured, fat, motherly old soul, that it was quite pleasant to have a little quiet chat with her

Her name was Mrs. Toosypegs, and she was the widow—poor thing—of a highly respectable eating-house keeper, who, she assured me, used to do such a deal in the eating line, that he would sometimes have as many as five hundred dinners a day. Unfortunately, however, one evening, "the spirit of progress"—as they call it—got into his head, and he would go having an ordinary for the Million, every day, at every half-hour, at only fifteen-pence a head. But the Million—drat 'em!—had every one of them the appetites of a hundred; and the consequence was, that there was no satisfying them, although he gave them oceans of soup, and as much fish as they could eat, by way of what he called a damper to their raging appetites; though really it seemed quite thrown away upon them: for, Lord bless you, when the joint was brought up, they seemed to be as fresh and ravenous as ever, and would fall-to at the meat, as if the Million were a parcel of boa-constrictors, and only in the habit of being fed twice a year. And she declared that, often and often, the waiters had to shake many of the Million to wake them up and get them to pay; and that when they swept up the room of a night, she had, over and over again, collected several gross of waistcoat buttons, which the greedy young ogres had actually burst off with her husband's food. So that at last the blessed Million positively ate Mr. Toosypegs through the Insolvent Court, and left him little or nothing to satisfy his poor creditors with; and this so preyed upon her dear man's mind, that in an insane moment of despair, he raised his own boiled-beef knife against himself, and fell, like another Cook, a victim to the Cannibals who prowled about *To-heat-he*. After which, Mrs. Toosypegs informed me she had been put to it so hard, that she had been obliged to go out nursing; and, thank goodness, she had done as well as could be expected; for though she had no dear little Toosypegs of her own, still she had brought such numbers of children into the world, that she could not help looking upon herself in the light of a mother of a very large family—indeed, she was always speaking of the little pets she had nursed as if they were her own flesh and blood; for at one time she would talk to me of a very fine boy she had had in Torrington Square, and at another, of her beautiful twins at Ball's Pond; and then, of a sweet little flaxen-haired beauty of a little girl of hers with eleven toes, that she had had at Captain Jones's, at Puddle Dock. And really, last year, she said she had had as many as eight confinements in the course of the twelvemonth, and which had been almost more than she had strength to go through with. Her last lying-in had been in the suburbs, near Stockwell Park; and what made her month very agreeable was, that the family lived in a long terrace, and she knew all the neighbours' little secrets; for all kinds of strange reports used to travel from house to house, over the garden walls, or else from door to door, when the maids were cleaning the steps of a morning. And she advised me, if ever I took a house in a terrace a little way out of town, to be very careful that it was the centre one—at least, if I had any regard for my reputation. For I must be well aware that a story never lost by telling; and consequently, if I lived in the middle of a row of houses, it was very clear that the tales which might be circulated against me would only have half the distance to travel on either side of me, and therefore could only be half as bad, by the time they got down to the bottom of the terrace, as the tales that might be circulated against the wretched individuals who had the misfortune to live at the two ends of it; so that I should be certain to have twice as good a character in the neighbourhood as they had. For instance, she informed me of a lamentable case that actually occurred while she was there. The servant at No. 1 told the servant at No. 2 that her master expected his old friends the Baileys to pay him a visit shortly; and No. 2 told No. 3 that No. 1 expected to have the Baileys in the house every day; and No. 3 told No. 4 that it was all up with No. 1, for they couldn't keep the bailiffs out; whereupon 4 told 5 that the officers were after No. 1, and that it was as much as he could do to prevent himself being taken in execution, and that it was nearly killing his poor, dear wife; and so it went on, increasing and increasing, until it got to No. 32, who confidently assured the last house, No. 33, that the Bow-street officers had taken up the gentleman who lived at No. 1, for killing his poor dear wife with arsenic, and that it was confidently hoped and expected that he would be executed at Horsemonger-lane jail, as the facts of the case were very clear against him. All which, Mrs. Toosypegs said, proved, very clearly, that servants were a "bad lot," and that there was no trusting 'em with anything, but what they must go

wasting their time gossiping and putting it about all over the neighbourhood. Though, for her own part, she always made it a rule to shut her ears against all scandal.

Edward was quite right; for Mrs. Yapp, when she found that dear mother only turned her nose up at her filthy medicines, tried to see how disagreeable she could make herself to my respected parent. And I declare, on the very first night, they both went quarrelling up stairs to bed, where dear mother — who, being a stout woman, has always accustomed herself to sleep cool — would insist upon having two of the blankets, and all the cloaks, taken off the bed, for she protested that, what with the fire, and the shawl pinned before the window, there wasn't a breath of air stirring in the room, saying, that, for her part, she should like to have the window open. This, that disagreeable old Mrs Yapp declared would be certain death to her, and she shouldn't allow anything of the kind; and scarcely had poor dear mother taken the blankets off the bed, than Mrs. Yapp rushed up, and began putting them on again; so there they both stood for a good hour at least, one taking them off as fast as the other put them on, until they got tired, and agreed that if Mrs. Yapp would forego making up the fire for the night, and consent to waive the warming-pan, why, my dear, good, obliging mother would, in her turn, allow the coddling old thing to have as many blankets, and gowns, and cloaks on her side as she liked. But no sooner had they got into the small bed than they both began growling away, and each declaring that the other had got more than her proper share of it, so that mother told me that neither of them got a wink of sleep all night. And really, when they came down to breakfast the next morning, they wouldn't open their mouths to each other — much to that wicked Edward's delight, who kept rubbing his hands, and pressing mother to try a couple of tea-spoonfuls of Epsom salts, as Mrs. Yapp did in her tea, and asking the old she-quack whether she did not think Mrs. B—ff—n's liver was out of order, and what she would recommend for her under the circumstances.

That evening, whilst we were at dinner, a parcel came, with a letter for me, which, on opening, proved to be from those dear, sweet girls, the two Misses B—yl—s's, saying, "they would feel much obliged if I would present the accompanying article to one who would call for it in a day or two." On undoing the parcel, I declare if it wasn't a beautiful white satin pincushion, with a superb lace border, while on it was printed in pins—

This, of course, was fine nuts to crack for Mr. Edward; who must go cutting his stupid jokes upon a subject which as I told him at the time, I thought would be much better left alone. But there was no stopping him; and he wanted to send out for a pennyworth of baby-pins, and put an *s* to the stranger—saying that the Misses B—yl—s's had sent it to me only half-finished.

On the 22nd of March, 1841, the following advertisement appeared in the *Times* and the *Morning Post:* — "On the 20th instant, at Duvernay Villa, P—rk V—ll—ges, R—g—nt's P—rk, the lady of Edward Sk—n—st—n, Esq., of a daughter." And quite early on the morning of the day mentioned in the advertisement, anybody passing our house might have seen my dear mother tying up our knocker with a white kid glove.

My baby was the loveliest tiddy ickle sing of a ducks-o'-diamonds that I think I ever saw in all my life — and, thank Heaven! all its little limbs were straight, and it hadn't a single blemish upon it—if, indeed, I except some strange marks it had on one side of its beautiful little neck, and which I told nurse I was as certain as certain could be was a letter and some figures; for I could make out a

perfect F, and a 4 and a 2, and when I cast it up in my own mind, I remembered this was exactly what that impudent, big-whiskered monkey of a policeman, who had frightened me so by winking at me, had got printed on the collar of his coat. At first, I was rather vexed that it wasn't a boy; for, to tell the truth, I had set my heart upon having one. When, however, I came to turn it over in my mind, I wasn't at all sorry that it was a girl, for she would be such a nice companion for me when she grew up, and, of course, would take all the trouble of the house off my hands. Besides, I do think boys are such Turks, and so difficult for a woman to manage, so that, as it was a mere toss-up between the two, I do think, if I had had a choice in the matter, I should have cried "woman" after all.

I wish any one could only have seen my dear, dear mother—I can assure them it really was a treat worth living for—sitting by the fireside, with my little unconscious angel lying in her lap, and pulling down its sweet little nose, so as to seduce it into symmetry. She told me the first duty a mother owed to her infant was to pay proper attention to its nose, as really, at that tender age, it was as plastic as putty, and could be drawn out just like so much india-rubber; indeed, Nature, she might say, seemed to have kindly placed the child's nose in its mother's hands, and left it for her to say whether the cherub should be blessed with an aquiline, or cursed with a snub. I had to thank herself, she said, for the shape of mine; for when I was born, she really had fears that it would take after my father, and his was a bottle; so that it was only by never neglecting my nasal organ for an instant, and devoting every spare minute she had to its growth and formation, that she had been able to rescue it from the strong likeness it had, at first, to my father's. And she begged of me to carry this maxim with me to my grave—"That noses might be grown to any shape, like cucumbers; and that it was only for the mother to decide whether the infant nasal gherkin should be allowed to run wild, and twist itself into a 'turn up,' or should, by the process of cultivation, be forced to grow straight, and elongate itself into a Grecian." And then the dear, good body informed me that, touching the dear cherub's eyes, I should find they would require a great deal of looking after—indeed, quite as much as the nose; for all children naturally squinted, and she thought nothing on earth looked so dreadful and vulgar as to see a pair of eyes wanting to go different ways, for all the world like two perverse greyhounds coupled together; and she was convinced that goggle-eyes and swivel-eyes, and, in fact, every other variety of eye but the right, merely arose from bad nursing. Consequently, I ought to be very careful not to allow any nurse with even so much as a cast to enter my service, until my little dear had learnt to look straight before it. And, above all, I was to be very particular, for some time to come, never to permit my little petsy wetsy to look over its head, for fear its eyes should become fixed in that uncomfortable position, and I should have my poor little girl walking about with them always turned up like a methodist preacher. Then she begged of me, as I loved my baby, never to allow it to yawn without putting my hand under its chin, to prevent it dropping its jaw, or I should have the misery of seeing my eldest daughter going through the world with its mouth always open, like a carriage-dog, or one of the French toy nut-crackers. Moreover, she said she hoped I would be very particular with the little darling's little wee legs; for if I should be imprudent enough to rub them downwards, as sure as her name was B—ff—n, I should have the pleasure of seeing them in after life with no more calf to them than an ostrich's; whereas, if I took care to rub them upwards every morning, then, when she grew up, I should have the satisfaction of beholding the dear with as fine a pair of legs as an opera-dancer, or, she might say, a fashionable footman. So that, by the time dear mother had finished her instruction, I plainly saw, from what she said, that Nature had not done half its duty to babies, but had sent them into the world with their joints as imperfectly put together as cheap furniture, and that if the greatest care wasn't taken with them, they would be as certain to warp in all kinds of ways as any of the other articles which are puffed off as such temptations to persons about to marry.

My poor Edward was nearly out of his wits with joy at having such a beautiful child; and the stupid ninny would go giving Mrs. Toosypegs half a sovereign when she declared that it was the very image of its papa—and so the little angel was. But my gentleman must go cutting his stupid jokes again, and saying that as he missed a silver spoon down-stairs, he should like to know whether the child

had been born with one in its mouth—which set Mrs. Toosypegs off laughing so violently, that she seemed to think that she might as well work out her half sovereign that way as any other. So, upon that, Mr. Edward went on, and said, that as it hadn't been born with a silver spoon, perhaps it had with a Britannia metal one, which, he said, would be quite as lucky, as every one knew that it was a very good substitute for silver.

I was much gratified to hear a gentle ring at the street-door bell, which, I felt sure, was some one come to inquire after my health; and as Miss Susan was out, I told Mrs. Toosypegs to tell whoever it was that I had got a very fine little girl, and that we were going on as well as could be expected. When she came up again, she told me that it was a life-guardsman, with tremendous big black mustachios, who said he was quite delighted to hear it; so I at once saw that it was none other than that dreadful amorous ogre of a Ned Twist, who was making such violent cupboard love to my maid; and I asked Mrs. Toosypegs whether she had ever noticed any strange goings on in the kitchen, and requested her, as a favour, to keep a sharp eye upon Susan. I felt satisfied, that now she had got me safe in bed, she would be carrying on fine games, and I should be having half the barracks at supper in my kitchen every night; so I begged of Mrs. Toosypegs, whenever she went down stairs, to make a point of looking into the coal-cellar, saying that was the cage in which she stowed her Robbing Red-breasts—as Edward very cleverly calls them.

Mrs. Yapp, I regret to say, made herself very disagreeable throughout the whole business, and would have it that mother was conspiring against my daughter and myself to kill us. The fact was, they were both at daggers drawn about the way in which my baby and myself were to be treated; for one was for bathing the little darling in cold water, and the other in warm; and the one for bandaging it up like a little mummy, and the other letting its beautiful little limbs be perfectly free. One would have it that the soothing syrup was really what it professed to be, a blessing to mothers, while the other declared that it was nothing more than a poison to children. As for myself, one said I could never get round if I didn't have plenty of air, and the other vowed that I should never get up again if the room wasn't kept as close as possible. Dear mother assured me that I could only gain strength by taking as much solid food as I could manage, while Mrs. Yapp persisted in telling me, that in my state I ought to take nothing but slops—at least, if I wanted to get well; and they used to pester the poor doctor so, whenever he came, that at last he took offence, and said, that as he saw that I was in very good hands, he thought his services were no longer required. Somehow or other, Mrs. Toosypegs seemed to agree with everybody; so that I could not tell what on earth to do. Every day at dinner there was a regular fight at my bedside; for mother would insist upon my just taking a mouthful of the lean of a mutton-chop that she had cooked for me, while Mrs. Yapp declared that it would be the death of me, and would stand begging and praying of me to try a spoonful or two of her nice gruel—so, between the two, I couldn't get either any rest or food, for they neither would allow me to touch what the other recommended. And I do verily believe, if it hadn't been for Mrs. Toosypeg's giving me, on the sly, whatever I took a fancy to, I must, positively and truly, have been starved to death.

Directly the little cherub of a baby, too, used to cry, they both raced after each other up stairs. One said it had got the wind, and the other the stomach-ache and mother prescribed a spoonful of dill-water with some sugar, while the other stood out for as much rhubarb and magnesia as would lie on a sixpence.

All this delighted Edward extremely to hear, and he said that things were going on beautifully; and they were both of them getting as miserable and discontented as he could possibly have wished. At the same time, he desired Mrs. Toosypegs never to allow the ladies to come bothering me, and on no account to pay any attention to what either of them said; for the wicked rogue told me, that, in order to bring about the explosion he so devoutly prayed for, he always made it a point of siding with both of them. Accordingly, whenever Mrs. Yapp came complaining to him, he invariably agreed with her that Mrs. B—ff—n knew nothing about the treatment of infants, and he should take it as a favour if she would keep dear mother from interfering with me as much as possible;—while,

on the other hand, whenever Mrs. B—ff—n asked him what she had better do he always told her Mrs. Yapp was quite ignorant of the management of children, and that, of course, he wished my dear mother to prevent her from coming into the bed-room at all. So he supposed it was this that made them both so determined on pursuing their own plans; and though he assured me it was far from comfortable work sleeping upon that wretched sofa in the back drawing-room, with nothing but cloaks to cover him, still, he said, he shouldn't murmur, if it was stuffed with broken bottles instead of horse-hair, so long as his two mothers-in-law slept together, and had an opportunity of carrying on their quarrels in bed.

So matters went on; until, I declare to goodness, I got nearly as sick and tired of my own dear mother as I was worn out of all patience with the mother of my husband's poor first wife; and I began to wish to be quit of them both nearly as much as Edward did. I verily believe their continual quarrellings, and bickerings, and squabblings, threw me back frightfully; and, indeed, Mrs. Toosypegs told me, that, with the very fine constitution I have of my own, I ought to have been out of bed and about at least ten days earlier than I was (it was more than a month before I got thoroughly down-stairs). To my great horror, just before Mrs. Toosypegs went, she brought me word that the small-pox had broken out among the soldiers in Albany-street Barracks; and as I knew that those soldiers *would* come bothering after our pretty Susan, of course I saw clear enough that they would be bringing it into the house in their red jackets, and I should have my little girl catching it—poor innocent dear—and perhaps growing up with her face full of holes, and looking for all the world like a sponge. So I determined pretty quickly on getting nurse to go with me to the establishment in Bloomsbury-square, and get the sweet cherub vaccinated.

Accordingly, on the morrow, we jumped into a cab, and went down to the place. When we got there, I may safely say I never saw such a beautiful sight in all my life. If there was one dear little baby, I'm sure there must have been at least a hundred; and I really felt as if I could have taken them all in my arms, and hugged them every one — though, I must say, that the noise they made was almost too much for me, for what with the cries of some fifty of them, and the prattling of the mothers to the rest — I declare it was for all the world like the parrot-room at the Zoological Gardens. When *my* turn came for going in with my child to the doctor, I told Mrs. Toosypegs she must take the child, for I knew I should never be able to bear the sight of that unfeeling wretch of a doctor poking his great big lancet into its pretty little arms; and that I should go making a stupid of myself, and fainting right off at the first drop of blood I saw. So in went nurse, while I stopped outside, and, to drive the thoughts out of my mind, I began playing with a very nice respectable child that was next to me. While I was amusing myself in this way, a poor woman, seeing my arms empty, came up to me, and asked me if I would be kind enough to hold her child for a few minutes, while she stepped out to get a glass of water, for the heat of the place was really too much for her. Of course, I was very glad to oblige her, like a stupid, and, taking her baby, I said, "Certainly, with a great deal of pleasure" —though, if I had known what was going to happen then, I most assuredly would have seen her further first.

When nurse came back with my own poor dear little thing crying its beautiful blue eyes out, I told her to sit down with it just for a moment, while I went and looked after the other poor thing's mother, who, I feared, from the time she had been gone for the drop of water she spoke about, must have fainted off in the passage! But though I looked all about for her, both outside and inside the house, to my great horror, she was nowhere to be found. So I marched back, and sat down, and waited until all the mothers and children had gone, and nurse and myself and the two babies were the only people left in the place, when I really began to grow dreadfully alarmed, for I felt assured that some dreadful accident or mistake must have occurred. And when the porter came to tell me I must go, as he wanted to shut up the doors, I informed him of what had happened, and asked him to let me leave the brat with him, so that he might give it to the mother when she called. But the brute would not hear of such a thing, and said that the best way would be for me to take it home with me, and leave my address

with him, and then he could send the mother up to me when she came after it. Accordingly I gave the man my card, with particular instructions that he was to make the woman come on to me as fast as her legs would carry her, directly she called; for as I very truly said at the time, I didn't know how I should ever be able to get through the night with the pair of them.

When we got home, there was a fine piece of work with the pair of them, for the little brat of a stranger wouldn't eat a thing, though we tried with both the spoon and the bottle, and really squalled in such a way that I was obliged to give it something to pacify it. Edward was so surly at the noise the two children made, that I really thought, what with the noise he and the babies made, I should have gone clean out of my senses; for he said, I didn't seem to think that two mothers-in-law were sufficient to have in the house at once, but I must go adding to them two babies.

I really do believe it must have been nearly eleven o'clock before I had the doors done up, for I made certain that brute of a mother would never think of leaving her child with me all night. But I soon found myself preciously mistaken, for, on undressing the poor little half-starved thing, I declare if there was not tacked to the body of its little petticoat a strip of paper, on which was written:—"Plese to treet im wel—Is name is Alfred;"—so that it was now as plain as the nose on my face I had been made a regular fool of, and the unfeeling wretch of a mother, observing, I dare say, my love for children, and that I was very well dressed, was induced to single me out, drat her! as her victim; for of course it was her intention, from the first, to make me adopt her brat, whether I liked it or not.

As it was impossible to send the infant round to the work-house at that late hour of the night, why, I was obliged to take it up-stairs to bed with me, and a precious night both Edward and I had of it, goodness knows! For directly that little brute of an Alfred began to cry, of course he set my little pet of a Kate off, too; consequently, while I was trying to get the one off to sleep with a drop, I was obliged to make Edward set up in bed and rock the other, which he did, all the while grumbling and abusing me in a most shameful manner; wondering how I could ever have been such a born idiot to have allowed myself to have had a strange child put upon me in such a place.

Early in the morning, immediately after Edward had left for business, I sent Susan off to the workhouse with the squalling young urchin, instructing her to tell the parish authorities how shamefully I had been imposed upon, and to say that I felt it to be my duty, under the circumstances, to hand it over to them. But, hang it! there seemed to be no chance of getting rid of the brat, for back came Susan, all in a fluster, and said that the porter at the gate had told her, in a very impudent manner, that I must come round myself the next Board day and represent the case to the Guardians; and if the facts would bear investigation, why, perhaps they might make out an order to have it admitted.

Here was a pretty state to be in; for Susan said the next Board day wasn't for five days to come, and it was impossible for me ever to think of keeping the child all that time, and I really felt as if I could have put it in the old fish-basket we had in the house, and tied it to the first knocker that I came to. Indeed, as it was, I did go up-stairs to Mrs. Yapp, and both dear mother and myself tried, for upwards of an hour, as hard as ever we could, to get her to adopt the poor little foundling. But of course it was of no use appealing to the maternal feelings of a hard-hearted creature like her; for we couldn't get her to take it, although both of us kept pointing out to her what a comfort, we had no doubt, it would grow up to be to her in her old age, and what a noble act she would be doing in rescuing the poor little innocent dear from the work-house, and, might be, a prison; saying that it was impossible, under the circumstances, to tell what would become of it—but it was all to no use. Although she has got four hundred a-year, and no children, still the mean old thing positively refused to have anything to do with the poor dear little "incumbrance," but I do verily believe that if the child had only had the good luck to be sickly, she would willingly have consented to have acted the part of a mother to it, if it was only for the sake of having some one to physic.

Consequently, I made up my mind to send it down to Edward by Susan, telling him what the work-house people had said, and begging him to go up to them

with it, and make them take it in directly, as I told him he must very well know they were in law bound to do.

In about two hours, Susan came back, like a good girl, to my infinite delight, without the baby. When I asked her what on earth she had done with it, I thought I should have died with laughter; for she told me, that on her way down to Chancery Lane she had met with Mary Hooper—who had been a fellow-servant of hers, and who is now living as nursery-maid at Mr. C—tl—n's, the solicitor, in John Street, Bedford Row—and as she was going to take the two little Misses C—tl—n for a walk in Gray's-inn Gardens, of course my Miss Susan must go in with her.

While she was there, she said, there were some impudent young barristers, whose chambers were on the ground-floor, leaning out of one of the windows at the back, and smoking their nasty cigars, and playing the fool with the nursery-maids, instead of minding their business. And as she was walking up and down, they must needs go getting into conversation with her; and pretending to admire the baby she had got in her arms, first asking her how old it was, and then declaring that they never before, in the whole course of their lives, saw such a fine boy for his age; and then inquiring whether it was her own, and a whole pack of other rubbish besides. At last one of the gentlemen, who she said had got red hair and sandy whiskers, begged to be allowed to give the dear little baby a kiss, as he was passionately fond of children. So she handed the child up to him, and no sooner had the sharp fellow got hold of it, than he refused to let her have it back again, unless she came round to their chambers and fetched it herself; whereupon Susan told him, that as he wouldn't give the child up without it, she supposed she must. But no sooner had she got outside the gardens, than it very properly struck her, that as the gentleman was so fond of children, she might just as well leave it with him altogether, instead of letting it go to the workhouse, poor little pet!

I really thought I should have killed myself with laughing, for I remembered I had that very morning, before sending the infant round to the workhouse, sewed on again the identical strip of paper which I had found stitched on to its little petticoat body, just to show it to the workhouse authorities, and which requested the party into whose hands the poor babe fell to treat it kindly, and that its name was Alfred.

I told Susan I was *very* much pleased with what she had done, and I gave her five shillings, and said she might go out for a holiday as soon as she liked, adding, that she had in a very clever manner given the impudent fellows a good deal more than they sent, and in a way that not only showed she was one too many for them, but would teach them never again to go making love to the child for the sake of the maid.

When Edward came home, he was as pleased as Punch. He declared it just served the lawyers right, and was a bit of sharp practice that did Susan much credit. And then he made a very good pun upon it, for he said that he had a very great mind to go down and stick a board up in the gardens opposite the window of the young fellow to whom Susan had handed the innocent creature, with "Lambs taken in to *Gray's Inn* here," painted in large letters upon it.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW, WHAT WITH ONE THING AND ANOTHER, IT REALLY IS A MERCY THAT I WAS NOT IN MY GRAVE LONG AGO.

> "For there's nae luck about the house,
> There's nae luck at a',
> There's little pleasure in the house," &c.
> "THERE'S NAE LUCK ABOUT THE HOUSE."

POSITIVELY I was no sooner out of one scrape, than, as sure as the next day came round, I was safe to be in another. The beauty of it was, too, that my unlucky stars (and having been born under Saturn, the reader may well imagine that I've had no very pleasant time of it) seemed determined I should invariably be the victim of other people's misdemeanours. For I always thought that that old quack of a Mrs. Yapp would be the death of some of us, with her filthy

medicines, and so she nearly was—indeed, it 's quite a mercy that the whole house wasn't dead and buried long ago.

I think I mentioned somewhere before, that the old hen had got four hundred a year, but positively, if it had only been five-and-twenty, she couldn't have been stingier than she was. I never knew her give a penny away to a soul, and as for making any present to my dear little Kitty-pitty, bless you, not even so much as a mere six-and-sixpenny coral and bells did she give the angel, and which I thought was the very least she could have done, after we had been keeping her in the handsome way we had, without expecting the least return for it. If she could save a farthing she would walk her legs off; indeed, I've known her go miles just to get a thing a halfpenny a pound cheaper, though she must have worn out at least sixpenny-worth of shoe leather in the journey.

Well, in one of her rambles after bargains, the old thing had stumbled upon a little poking hole of an out-of-the-way chemist's shop, with a bill in the window, announcing that *they* (pretty they!) were now selling *their* best Epsom salts at the low price of seven pounds a shilling; and as my lady was in the habit of paying twopence and threepence for every pound weight of the stuff she swallowed, why this was a temptation that she could not resist; so she must needs go prancing into the shop, saying she would take one pound just to try.

The old thing came home to dinner, quite full of her bargain, and she would undo the parcel, and show us what a beautiful quality the stuff was; declaring, that if it only turned out as good as she expected, she would buy all there was in the place, for they were so cheap, she said, that she felt perfectly satisfied they must have been stolen, —and promising herself a couple of ounces of it, by way of a nice treat in the morning.

At breakfast, the next day, she told us that it seemed as if some superior power had led her to buy her salts yesterday; for she had just heard from Susan that the small-pox had already reached the next door but one, and she had no doubt that it would be our turn next. Then she went on so dreadfully about it, and we all got so terribly alarmed, that we were ready to do anything — for she kept dinning in our ears, that vaccination was only good for seven years, and that the only chance we had of escaping it, and preventing our faces being pitted all over like a honeycomb, was to sweeten our blood with a little cooling medicine, and that really a spoonful or two of her salts all round was just the very thing we wanted. Edward too seemed to take a delight in aggravating the horrors of the disease, and exaggerating the virtues of the remedy which Mrs. Yapp had prescribed for us, and kept on until at last we did as she wished, and swallowed a couple of spoonfuls each. After which I had Miss Susan up, and made her take some, as well, for I had no idea of having her laid up in the house, and paying, goodness knows what amount, in doctor's bills for her. But she was too much afraid of her complexion and beauty being spoiled to require much persuasion.

Edward had gone to chambers when dear mother, who was reading the advertisements in the *Times*, gave a loud scream, and cried out, "We are all poisoned!" And sure enough she showed me an advertisement at the top of the second column in the first page, headed CAUTION, and running as follows:—

"THE stout, elderly Lady, with tortoiseshell spectacles, and dressed in a black straw bonnet, trimmed with canary ribbon, with a small squirrel tippet, and a black German velvet gown, is earnestly requested not to take any of the pound of Salts she bought at the Chemist's in M—nm—th Str—t, S—v—n D—ls, and said she would have more if she liked them, as through the mistake of an inexperienced apprentice, she was served with Oxalic Acid instead."

No one can imagine the dreadful state this threw us all into, and it was as much as I could do to prevent mother from flying at Mrs. Yapp and tearing her to pieces, limb by limb, on the spot; only I said that she had much better turn her thoughts to some antidote, and leave the wretched old woman to her own dreadful feelings. Whereupon, dear mother merely called her a murderess some half-dozen times, and gave her to understand, that even if she was lucky enough to get over it, as sure as their names were Yapp and B—ff—n, she would have her hung for it. The old one, however, told her not to talk in that foolish way—as she had done it all for the best—but to see about taking as much chalk or lime as we possibly could, as that was the only thing that could save us. And then I declared if the old thing didn't seize hold of the fire shovel with one hand, and

a plate off the breakfast table with the other, and jumping up on a chair, began scraping away at my beautiful ceiling, whilst I ran down-stairs, and, telling Susan what had happened, and what Mrs. Yapp had prescribed as antidote, we both of us made a rush at the plaster of Paris images that the girl had stuck up over the mantelpiece; and whilst she was devouring her beautiful painted parrot, I eat Napoleon Bonaparte all but his boots.

Dear mother, who wouldn't believe in anything that Mrs. Yapp said, declared that nothing would do her good but candles, and the poor dear soul had got through a whole rushlight and the better part of a long six, by the time that Mrs. Toosypegs (whom I had packed off in a cab to our doctor, and the chemist who had sold Mrs. Yapp the poison, and for Edward) got back to us again, bringing the chemist himself with her, and who said he was happy to inform us that it was all a mistake, and that the packet of oxalic acid, which they had fancied the young man had served the lady in a tortoiseshell spectacles with, had been found, and that we had taken nothing but the very best Epsom salts after all.

Edward came rushing in shortly afterwards; and when he heard that it had only been a false alarm, I declare if he didn't fall down on the sofa, and nearly split his sides: which made us all so wild, that I really felt as if I could have boxed the ears of the unfeeling monster; and I know for a positive fact that dear mother's hands were itching to do it as well. As it was, the good old soul rated him soundly; for not being able to contain herself, she flew out at him, and told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself to lie there, as he was, chuckling over the distresses of the very woman whom he had sworn to love and cherish in sickness as well as in health—to say nothing of herself, who was my mother—and that at a time, too, when he ought to go down on his bended knees, and thank his stars for our miraculous escape. But Edward only grinned the more, and kept telling her that it was as good fun as the Derby-day, and that he had never known such capital sport after the Epsom Cup before.

This was too much for my beloved parent; and she didn't hesitate to tell him that she wouldn't stop in the house another minute; and, after his inhuman, and, she might say, ungentlemanly conduct, would never set foot in it again so long as she lived. And accordingly, out of the room she bounced, and up-stairs she went, and having packed up her things, off she took herself.

Directly Edward found how well he had got rid of dear mother, he began to see what he could do with Mrs. Yapp. But though he said all kinds of sharp, cutting things to her, still it was no good, for she hadn't got mother's fine spirit, and really seemed to be as hard to get out of the house as black beetles are. However, at one time, he did make her say, that directly she learnt that her house in the country was fit to receive her, and the smell of the paint was fairly out of it, she would not trouble us any more with her company.

When at night I talked over the circumstances with Edward, I could not help confessing to him, I was far from sorry that dear mother had left, and that there was a prospect of Mrs. Yapp doing the same shortly—for, what with one and the other, they so tormented poor Susan, that I declare it was one round of noises from morning till night. First Mrs. Yapp would come to me, saying, that Susan had insulted her in a most disrespectful manner; and then Mrs. B—ff—n would march up to tell me that she couldn't get Susan to do a thing for her. And after that I should have Mrs. Toosypegs come tearing up to say, that Susan had had the impudence to assert that the kitchen was no place of hers; and lastly, up would come Miss Susan herself, to know who was her Missus—and whether it was Mrs. Yapp, Mrs. B—ff—n, Mrs. Toosypegs, or myself; and declaring that it was more than one pair of hands could do to attend to the whole of them. So as Mrs. B—ff—n had gone, and Mrs. Toosypegs was going on the morrow, and Mrs. Yapp had threatened to go in a few days, why, thank heavens, there seemed to be a chance of some peace and comfort at last.

The day after Mrs. Toosypegs had left, Susan came to ask me whether it would be convenient for me to let her have a holiday on the morrow, and as I had been stupid enough to promise her one for getting rid of the strange child in the clever way she had, I didn't see how I could well refuse, and consented to let her have one accordingly.

On the morrow, hearing my lady come down-stairs, I went to the window to see how she looked; for I felt certain that she would be dressed out to death

Sure enough, there she was, with at least six flounces to her skirt, and a black trumpery imitation blond lace bonnet, with a lot of bright red flowers stuck all about it, and what I would stake my existence was Mrs. Yapp's green silk parasol—for I knew it by the carved ivory handle; as she had over and over again told me, the stick of it had been presented her by an old flame of hers, who was the third officer of an East Indiaman.

However, as it wasn't my parasol, of course I had got nothing to do with it, and I had had quite hubbub enough in the house, without going making any any more noises about such a trumpery affair as that. Besides, if the woman couldn't spare time enough to look after her own things, why, I wasn't going to do it for her; and she had no right to go out for the day as she had that morning, leaving her drawers open as a temptation to the poor girl.

The day afterwards, I thought something was in the wind, for Miss Susan came to me all of a fluster, and said that she should feel obliged if I would let her have ten shillings in advance. I however very properly gave her to understand that, as she had already had one pound fifteen on account of her next quarter, I should't do anything of the kind, adding that it really was astonishing to me what on earth she did with all her money.

Miss Susan seemed to be dreadfully put out by my refusal, (and well the wicked puss might, from what came out afterwards) for one evening, Edward had just got home from chambers, when he met a man on the door-step, and on asking him what he wanted, he said that he wished to speak with the lady who owned the parasol he had brought with him, and which Edward knew very well belonged to Mrs. Yapp. So, when I opened the door, my husband asked the man to step into the parlour, and finding Mrs. Yapp there, told him that that was the lady he wanted. Whereupon the man said he was the head waiter of the Chalk Farm Tavern, and had brought home the parasol that she had left with his missus, on account of her not having money enough to pay the whole of the bill she had incurred when she was there with a life-guardsman. Mrs. Yapp blushed a bright orange right up to her eyes, (for it was impossible for her bilious complexion to blush crimson,) and said that it certainly was her parasol, but how it ever came into the man's possession she wouldn't attempt to say; for as to her ever having been inside a tavern with a life-guardsman, it was an abominable, wicked falsehood, that it was, and the man was a scoundrel to dare to come there and try to extort money from her under any such shameful pretences.

I declare I could hardly smother my laughter with my pocket-handkerchief, for, as I whispered in Edward's ear, it was Susan, I knew, that had been running up the bill there, with that vagabond, Ned Twist, and that two or three days before I had seen her going out with that very parasol: I could see Edward was determined to have a bit of fun, for, with a wicked smile, he asked the man whether there might not be some mistake, for Mrs. Yapp was a highly respectable lady, and he could not bring himself to believe that she would, at her time of life, go keeping company with a life-guardsman. But the man said, "What mistake can there be?—didn't the lady acknowledge that the parasol was hers?—and how should I have known where the owner of it lived, if she hadn't at the time given her address. But of course she wont acknowledge it, because I've mentioned it before company; though I'll be bound, that if I had seen her alone, she would have recollected all about it pretty quickly; still it's useless her trying to get out of it; for there's the bill, and if she'll look at it, she'll see what she had, and that there was five shillings paid, and a matter of two and threepence left owing, and that's what I want; and if I don't get it, I shall take the parasol back—that's all." And the man handed Mrs. Yapp the account, who threw it back upon the table.

"I don't want to see your bill, sir," she cried. "It's all a shameful imposition, and you know it is; and what's more, if you don't give me up my parasol this minute, I shall appeal to Mr. Sk—n—st—n to make you. I never heard of such a thing, in all my life, coming here and taking away a respectable woman's character, in the hopes of getting a trumpery two and threepence. Did you see me at your 'Chalk Farm,' as you call it, sir?"

"No," replied the man; "but the waiter that served you did, and so did missus; and she said, you were with Ned Twist,—and he's very well known to us, for he brings more business to our house than any other man in the regiment

—and if it hadn't been for fear of losing *his* custom, we shouldn't have trusted *you*."

"Well, my good man," said my husband, with a roguish grin, "as you're so positive, I'd better pay you the money, rather than have any disturbance about such an unpleasant business." And Edward having done so, the man left, when Mrs. Yapp flew out in a most dreadful way, and declared, that Edward ought to be ashamed of himself for encouraging the man in the way he did, and going c.. as if he really believed what the villain had said. But Edward just put it to her, as a woman of the world, to say whether he could have done otherwise, when the facts of the case were so very strong against her; in all of which I of course agreed. And I declare it *was* such capital fun to see how she went on, when Edward took up the bill, and began reading it aloud as follows:—

	s.	d.
4 Glasses of Rum and Water	2	0
3 Screws and a Pipe	0	3
2 Teas, with Shrimps	2	6
A small Glass of White Wine Negus, and Biscuits	1	0
1 Bottle of Lemonade	0	3
Ditto Soda with Brandy	0	9
3 Cheroots	0	6
	7	3
By Cash	5	0
By Parasol	2	3

Then Edward kept remarking upon the different items, saying that it was very easy to see what was for Mr. Ned Twist, and what was for the lady—whoever it might be that accompanied him. And really and truly, if it was his dear mother-in-law, and she had been foolish enough to go falling in love with any of those good-looking dogs at the barracks, he didn't see that there was any necessity for concealing her passion; for if the man were respectable, why, he should be very happy to see him, and question him as to whether his intentions were honourable towards her. It would have done any one's heart as much good as it did mine to see how angry this made the poor bilious old lady, who, all the time that Edward was teasing her, was biting her lips, and shaking her leg up and down with downright passion, while she pretended to be very busy reading a book—(I never saw such reading)—until at last her bile got the better of her, and would not allow her to stand a joke; for, declaring that she would leave the house the very next day, she bounced out of the room, slamming the door after her as hard as she could, till she made all the glasses on the sideboard jingle again, and up she went sulking to her room, where she stopped, and wouldn't come down to dinner, nor allow us to send any up to her—as if she thought that would hurt us—a stupid old toad! All this, I said to myself, comes of having people in the house who must go getting angry over a mere joke.

I told Edward that, as she had declared she would go on the morrow, and Susan told me that she really was packing up her things in real earnest, he might as well go up and tell her that he had only meant what he said in fun, and get her to come down to tea; or else, perhaps, what with her passion, and starving herself, she might be laid up before she left our house with a bilious fever. But he wouldn't think of doing anything half so rash, he said, adding, that it would be quite time enough to apologize as soon as she should be dressed ready to go on the morrow.

Next day, Edward wouldn't go down to chambers, for fear, as he said, that I should go playing the fool, and making it up with Mrs. Yapp. Knowing that she was going by the one o'clock coach, I got a nice little luncheon ready for her (just a few sandwiches cut from the lean part of the silver side of a round of beef, between some digestive bread); and when she came down to wish us good-bye, Edward told her he was sorry that she had taken in earnest what he only intended in joke—and I confessed that I knew it was Susan who had taken her parasol all the while, saying I was sure that if anything similar had occurred to me, I shouldn't allow so slight a thing as that to ruffle my temper; and that I trusted she wouldn't think of leaving us so soon—though I really was afraid of pressing her too much, for fear she might think I meant what I said. So, after a little coaxing, we got her to sit down and take a mouthful with us, telling her that

Susan should run out to get her a coach, and I would slip on my things and go down with her to the coach-office, and see her off with a great deal of pleasure.

While we were waiting for Susan to come with the coach, there was a ring at the door, and, when I opened it, it was a man who said that he had brought his bill for the tobacco, and which he said he should feel obliged if I would settle. So I showed him in to Edward, as the only person in the house that smoked. But no sooner did he get into the room than he handed the bill to me, and said he believed I should find that it was all correct, and when I looked at it I declare that it was nothing more than a string of near upon twenty half-ounces of "bird's-eye returns." So I asked Edward whether he knew anything about it; but the man said it was for me. Whereupon I asked him what he meant; and he had the impudence to persist in saying that I myself was the party who had purchased it for——

"For whom?" I said, with great indignation.

The man put his finger up to his mouth, as much as to say "Mum" before company.

"Say what you have to say, man," I replied, "and don't stand there making any of your signs and signals to me."

On this, he came as close as he dared to me, and keeping his eye fixed on Edward, said, in a low whisper through the corner of his mouth—"You know—for Ned Twist, the life-guardsman."

I gave a loud scream, and flying to Edward, cried out—"Oh, Edward, here 's a man says I owe him a bill for tobacco for that odious Ned Twist, the life-guardsman!"

Edward went up to him directly, and told him that it must be the servant that he wanted, and not myself, as I was his wife.

"Lord bless you!" replied the man, "as if I hadn't seen the lady in my shop, along with Ned Twist, scores and scores of times, in the very same black velvet shawl that she 's got on now."

I forgot what they said to each other after this, but I know they were just getting to high words—for the impudent wretch would keep insisting that it was I, and none other, who had purchased the tobacco of him for Ned Twist; and I was expecting every moment that Edward would be knocking him down, when, to my great joy, I heard Miss Susan come up in the hackney-coach to the door, and I ran to it, and brought her into the room. Then it turned out that all the time during my confinement that minx, Miss Susan, had been in the habit of going out of an evening, two or three times a week, dressed in my black velvet shawl, and running up all kinds of debts for Mr. Ned Twist, all round the neighbourhood.

Of course, this was more than I could bear; so I just told Miss Susan that she would please to provide herself with a new situation that day month; and very luckily, her quarter would be just up then, or else I should certainly have had to have packed her off with a good part of her wages in advance.

The worst of it all was too, that Mrs. Yapp, although she had been living under our roof, and feeding off the fat of the land at our table for near upon a couple of months, must go insulting me before she left our house, and repeated to me in a most tantalising and unladylike way, all that I had said to her in the morning, about putting up with what she was pleased to call a mere joke, and reminding me of what I had very imprudently told her, that if I found a servant wearing my things, I should not care so much about it, after all. So as I wasn't going to put up with her saucy taunts all the way down to the coach-office, I said I felt very ill, and wasn't in a fit state to go such a distance. Edward, too, it struck me at the time, might have behaved himself with a little more decency, for he would keep saying all kinds of unpleasant things, and which I dare say, *he* thought very clever indeed; but *I* couldn't see the point of them, though *Mrs. Yapp* must go giggling at them, as if they were the finest fun alive.

As for that Mr. Ned Twist, all I can say is, that if I could only have caught him, I should have told him a bit of my mind; and, as it was, I was as near as near could be, going round to the colonel of the regiment, and telling him that he ought to be ashamed of himself, to allow his men to go on in that way. For really there was some little excuse to be made for that stupid, conceited, highty-flighty, bit of goods of a Miss Susan of mine, for I 'm sure the girl was head over

ears in love with the gawky fellow, while he was only playing the fool with her. Every moment she could spare, there she was with a pen in her hand, scribbling a letter off to him, or else with a needle, making some shirts for the rip; and I declare, if she hadn't gone to the expense of having his portrait cut out in black paper, and had paid at least eighteen pence extra for the sake of having the fellow's mustachios and whiskers put in with a little trumpery bronze. Whenever, too, the minx could lay her hand upon any of my excellent jams or preserves, she would be sure to go making them up into pies or tarts, or something for that ogre of hers in a red coat; and once I found stowed away in the dresser-drawer a raspberry-jam tart, (we had had a roley-poley pudding for dinner the day before,) with a lot of open-work over it, and a small heart made out of pastry, and the initials E. T. in the same elegant material.

A little while after this, I declare there was no possibility of getting that girl to do a single thing in the house, for it appears that bothering regiment was about to change its quarters. And there she was, sighing and crying away in secret, and going moaning about the place with her eyes as red as two brandy-balls. When I stepped round to Albany Street, to see Mrs. L—ckl—y, in the evening, she told me it was just the same with her Maria—as, indeed, she said, it was with the maids all down the street, on both sides of the way; and when I let fall, by accident, the name of Ned Twist, she knew it directly, and told me she verily believed the fellow supped in her kitchen twice a week at least. Her maid was going clean out of her mind, she said, for his sake—although she had told her, over and over again, that the fellow didn't care two pins about her; for she, Mrs. L—ckl—y, knew for a positive fact that the good-looking glutton was all the while paying his addresses to the girls at both the pastry-cooks in the street, as well as to the maid at the fruiterer's over the way. Really, she said, there wasn't a female servant in the whole street that hadn't been spoiling her head of hair for the rogues, and she was sure that there would be as many locks given away on the day of the fellows' departure as would stuff a decent-sized mattress; though how that general lover, Mr. Ned Twist, would ever be able to find enough hair for the whole of his sweethearts, was a mystery to her. For if he behaved to them all alike, and gave a lock to each, there was no doubt the amiable villain would be obliged to throw in his whiskers and mustachios, in order that the supply might in any way be equal to the demand; while the good-looking vagabond would be obliged to go about with nearly all his hair cut off, like a French poodle, or else cropped as short as a knapsack.

When the day came for Susan to go, the poor girl had only a matter of eight shillings to receive out of the whole of her quarter's wages. And Edward asked her how on earth she meant to live until she got a new situation. Whereupon the wretched dupe burst into tears, and said she was sure she couldn't say; she had spent chief part of her earnings in paying for tobacco and drink for Ned Twist; and had lent him seven half-crowns; but she wouldn't mind about that so much, only she had sent two letters to him at Windsor, and he had never even answered them. And what was worse than all, she had heard, since he left, that she wasn't the only girl who had been fool enough to believe what he said, and to squander all her wages upon him; for she knew for a fact that in Albany Street alone, he had borrowed several pounds, in small sums, from different maids-of-all-work like herself, under the pretence of putting up the banns.

"But, my poor girl," said Edward, "what could ever have induced you to believe the vagabond?"

"I can't tell, sir," sobbed Susan; "only he used to come of an evening, and fill my head with a lot of stuff about honour and glory, and bleeding for his country; and saying that whenever the trumpet sounded, he would gladly die upon the battle-plain in defence of the maids of merry England; and then he used to say that the soldier loved only three things as dearly as his life—and they were, his country, his honour, and his sweetheart—and ask me, who was so quick as the gallant Son of Mars to protect a lovely and defenceless woman from the tyrant's grasp. So I couldn't help thinking that he was one of the noblest men I ever met, and after all his fine sayings, I never dreamt that he would go borrowing my wages, and running away without paying me, and leaving me perhaps to starve while I'm out of place; for what's to become of me now, goodness only knows."

This tale affected us both so much, that we quite pitied the poor girl, for I saw that it had been all along as I had expected; and upon my word, the man was so handsome, that there was every allowance to be made for our simple Susan. As I said before, and say again, Government ought not to allow these men to have so much idle time on their hands as they have, or else make it a rule, that if there must be soldiers, at any rate, that they should be ugly ones; for her Majesty's ministers ought to know that the red coats and bright buttons alone are quite sufficient to turn the heads of all the young girls, without the irresistible aggravation of a handsome face, and a pair of black mustachios.

Edward, who I must allow, is blessed with a good heart of his own, (though he has sometimes a strange way of showing it,) gave Susan a sovereign, and I added to it a pair of my old black silk stockings, (which cost me, I remember, as much as five-and-sixpence when they were new,) and an old morning-wrapper that I couldn't wear any longer, and I told her that, if at any time before she got into a situation, she chose to come in and help my new maid, or nurse my little girl, she might always rely upon having her dinner and tea in the house,—though I know it's foolish to be overkind to servants;—still as this was a case of real charity, I felt that I couldn't well do less, as I 'm sure all my readers will be ready to allow.

Though, after Susan had left me, I regret to say I found she was in no way deserving of my sympathy; for when my butcher's bill came in, I discovered that she had been in the habit of getting things for that gormandizing Don Giovanni of hers in the life-guards, and having them put down to my account; for, as Mrs. L—ckl—y had given me to understand, that Mr. Ned Twist was particularly partial to bullock's heart with veal stuffing, and that he would go through fire and water any day to get it, I at once saw by the bill who had been dining with Miss Susan every other day in the kitchen during my confinement; for there it was, sure enough. Leg of mutton, four-and-nine; bullock's heart, one-and-three; fillet of veal, six-and-two; bullock's heart, one-and-three; ribs of beef, five-and-seven; bullock's heart, one-and-three; belly of pork, three-and-one; bullock's heart, one-and-three. And so it went on, right down to the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER X.

OF A GIRL THAT CAME IN TO MIND MY BABY, AND THE EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER WE HAD TO CLEAN EDWARD'S BOOTS AND SHOES.

"Let us speak of a man as we find him,
And censure alone what we see;
And should any one blame, let's remind him,
That from faults we are none of us free."

"LET US SPEAK OF A MAN AS WE FIND HIM."

"She wander'd forlorn, without guardian or guide,
To the brink of the flood o'er the precipice side."

"AH! DID YOU NOT HEAR OF A POOR SILLY MAID."

AFTER Susan left me, I had one or two maids; but I really can't say what on earth had come to all the creatures, for none of them would suit me. However, as there was nothing particular about their goings on, and the annoyances they caused me were not of sufficient consequence to interest my readers, I shall merely say that, as I wasn't going to have any more pretty maids in my house so long as those dreadful barracks remained in the neighbourhood, I took good care to choose the very ugliest that I could pitch upon. I declare to goodness if the woman wasn't the very image of an ourang-outang in petticoats! Goodness gracious! I never saw such a head on a woman's shoulders before in all my life. Lord-a'-mercy upon the woman, if she hadn't nose enough for six! and it was of that peculiar shape which mother calls a bottle, and hairs all growing on the end of it, just like a large ripe red gooseberry. But I 'm sorry to say that I had overshot my mark this time; for, upon my word, the woman was so shamefully ill-favoured, and so frightfully bad-looking, that after she came into the house, instead of growing accustomed to her face, as I expected I should, it only seemed to me to grow more and more ugly every day; and Edward vowed that he couldn't bear to look upon her, and wouldn't have such a buck-horse, as he called her, in his

service; and, more than that, I declare my little ducks-o'-diamonds of a Kate used to scream itself nearly into fits directly the woman came near her. So I was obliged to get rid of her, though I must do the woman the justice to say that she answered my purpose very well, and did capitally for what I had engaged her—viz., to scare all the life-guardsmen away from my larder, which she did so effectually, that from the day after she entered my service, till the time she left, I never saw but one near the place, and he was a red-headed Irishman, and, I suppose, thought that, as the woman was so ugly, she must have a good bit of money in the savings bank; but even *he* only came once.

The next maid I had was too grand by half to please me, and ought to have been a duchess instead of a servant; as she told me, plump and plain, "that she couldn't a'bear the taste of 'ashes, and warn't a-going to have none of the scraps warmed up twice, and shoved off upon her." So, of course, I soon let the stuck-up thing know that she wouldn't suit me, and that I only hoped that the day might come when she would be glad to jump out of her skin to get a dishful of sweet and wholesome mutton, instead of standing there turning up her nose at it, as if she were a lady of fashion.

The servant that I had after my fine lady was really a good one; but she objected to clean boots and knives, declaring that she had lived as maid-of-all-work in the first of families—(I never knew such first of families—I had her character from a tobacconist),—where every morning a man used to come in and do them. Indeed, she positively refused to touch either; so, as I wasn't going to give into her—even if she had been the treasure that my mother promised to find me when I first got married—I determined to let her see who was mistress, and paying her a month in advance, I told her to go back and show her airs in her first of families, for she shouldn't in mine.

Really, what with all this worry and bother, and what with my nursing at the time, I declare it was pulling me down so low, that my poor bones were all starting through my poor skin, and positively I hadn't a bit of fat left upon my cheeks. If I drank one pint of porter throughout the day, I must have drunk near upon a dozen; and although the beer in the neighbourhood certainly was very good, still it seemed to be all thrown away upon me; and dear Edward very truly observed, that such a great big child as my Kitty was too much for me, and that either I must make up my mind to wean the poor little dear (which I couldn't bear the thoughts of), or I must take more substantial food, and keep always having something strengthening, and a glass of port wine every two hours throughout the day; for he said, he didn't wish me to go drinking so much porter; and that, as it was, there was nothing but one series of cries now at our door of "pots" and "beer," from the first thing in the morning to the last thing at night. Really, he felt quite ashamed to look at our area rails when he got up, for there wasn't a spike that hadn't got a pewter-pot hanging to it, so that any one to see the sight would imagine that porter after all was the real blessing to mothers, and that Barclay and Perkins ought to be looked upon as the gigantic wet-nurses to the infants of the metropolis, while Truman and Hanbury might, at the same time, be regarded in the light of the extensive purveyors of milk to the blessed babes of London.

I told him, for goodness' sake, to hold his tongue, and talk about something that he understood, and that I was sure I didn't take half as much stout as many ladies that I knew, for that ever since the little pet had been born, I had accustomed it to the bottle.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," he replied: "teaching a little innocent creature like that to fly for consolation to the bottle already. For my part," he continued, "I shouldn't at all wonder if she could, even now, at her tender age, manage her six bottles without being under the cradle."

"Well, I'm sure!" I exclaimed. "I think you might find something better to joke upon, Mr. Sk—n—st—n, and not go turning your own flesh and blood into ridicule."

"You know, my dear," he continued, sipping his wine in the coolest way possible, "I've told you at least a hundred times that it's one of the prettiest and most innocent little lambs I ever saw: so, come, my love, let's drink the darling's health; and I'll give you a toast—'May we ne'er want a baby, nor a bottle to give it!'"

I let him go on, for I saw that he was in a tantalizing humour, and that nothing

would please him better than to get my blood up; but I wasn't going to let him. Accordingly, I rang the bell for tea, and asked him, as I was nursing the child and he seemed to want something to do, just to make it.

I declare I never knew such poor, helpless, ignorant things as the men are!—for, positively and truly, Edward was obliged to ask me to tell him how many spoonfuls he was to put in. And he calls himself a lord of the creation, too! Pretty lord of the creation, indeed, not even to know how to make so much as a simple cup of tea! So I had my laugh at him, and asked him, in my sly, quiet way, how he would ever be able to manage without us. Then I told him, of course, that he was to put in one spoonful for each of us, and one for the pot.

"One for the pot!" he exclaimed; "what do you mean by that? How can the pot want a spoonful? I shan't do anything of the kind."

I really thought I should have died of laughter at seeing any one so stupid, and said — "Lord! how foolish you are, Edward! Why, of course it's only an extra spoonful, to make it better for ourselves; only it's always customary, when you're making tea, to say that it is for the pot."

"Ah!" he returned — "I see! It's the old story over again: doing something for ourselves, and making it out as if for another. And I'm very much afraid that, in these days of excessive philanthropy, more than one-half of what is termed charity is, after all, nothing more than 'one for the pot.'"

I knew, if I answered him, he would go on all night, so I held my tongue; and I declare if he didn't go putting almost every virtue down as "one for the pot," and had the impudence to say that the shilling I put into the plate after the charity sermon, the Sunday before last, was not done for the sake of the orphans, but out of fear of not doing as other people did, and consequently was really and truly "one for the pot;" and that the beer which I drank, and which I said I took solely on dear little Kitty's account, might also be put down as "one for the pot."

After a world of bother, I at length obtained a servant. To be sure she was as stupid as she could well be; but when I came to think of it, what on earth could that matter to me? For, as I said to myself, we don't want geniuses to wash up our dishes, or women of mind, indeed, to boil our potatoes. So I didn't care about the poor thing's deficiency of intellect, especially as it was muscles, and not brains, that I wanted, and she had a very good character from her last place; though really and truly the poor thing seemed to be half-witted, and I had to take great care about what I said to her, or she would be sure to go and take it literally. However, I had had so many knaves in the house before, that really I thought a fool would be agreeable, if it was only for the change. But whilst she was with me, the blunders she kept continually making were such that, whenever she came into my presence, I couldn't help saying to myself, I never knew a woman approaching so near an idiot, in all my life.

However, my lady had got sense enough left to object to cleaning the knives and the boots and shoes, and to stipulate, when I engaged her, that I should get somebody else to do them; so I told her, if I found she suited me, I should not make that an objection, as, indeed, I should not have done with the other one, had she asked for it with the proper respect that was due to me as her mistress. So there I was again as deep in the mire as ever, and obliged to go trotting about among the tradesmen, asking them if they could recommend me any honest, well-disposed person, that had got his mornings disengaged, and would like to turn an honest penny or two by polishing our knives and boots.

Moreover, as I found that my little girl was getting far too heavy for me, in my weak state, to carry, I, at the same time, told the tradespeople that I should feel obliged if they would send me round any respectable little girl that they might hear of, who was competent to take care of a child.

Next day, the oilman sent a girl round to me. She was a little round fat body, with what I thought at the time was dark brown hair, (though I since found out that it was a bright red, only greased for the occasion into a chestnut;) and she looked so clean and neat, that I was delighted with her. As the oilman said that he knew her father—who was a highly respectable journeyman-painter—and that the girl was a well-behaved child, I made no bones about taking her, but told her she might come, and I should give her two shillings a-week, and food, which would be a great help to her parents, who, I dare say, were anxious that a girl of her age should begin to turn her hand to something for a living.

She went on very well at first, as they all do, indeed, and came with her hair nicely brushed, and her face and hands and apron beautifully clean, for two or three mornings; and then, all of a sudden, a change came o'er the spirit of my dream, as the poet says, and anybody that had seen her look so tidy before, would never have known her again in the grubby state she appeared; for she used to come with her hair just the same as when she got up in the morning, and all frayed out like so much red worsted, and looking as coarse and fuzzy as cocoa-nut fibre—and with the hooks and eyes nearly all off her gown behind—and her nasty rusty black petticoat hanging down below her frock, all caked over with old mud —and her boots burst out, and laced up three holes at a time, just to save herself trouble, with the ends of the laces dangling about her heels, and allowed to drag in the wet, till they really looked for all the world like a bit of string—whilst her apron, I declare, was as dirty as a coal-heaver's stockings at the end of the week.

At last I found out who and what my lady was. For one day, after I had spoken to her about the disgraceful state of her clothing, and had told her that she really must get her boots mended if she wished to stop in my service, lo, and behold! my little monkey appeared next day in a pair of old, dirty, worn-out, white satin shoes. And when I asked her what on earth could possess her to think of ever coming into my house with such disgraceful things as she had got on her feet, I declare, if she didn't tell me that they were the shoes that she wore when she used to dance, as "*La Petite Saqui,*" on the tight-rope at the Queen's Theatre, in Tottenham-court-road, until she grew too stout for the business.

I uttered a faint scream at the idea of my sweet cherub being intrusted to the care of such a creature, and asked her what in the world could have induced her to take such an extraordinary means of getting a living? But she merely said that her father had a large family, and he had apprenticed her at a very early age to her uncle, who, together with her cousin, and a young gentleman of the name of Biler, were the original Bedouin Brothers, and who, she told me, were declared by the public press and her father to be the first posture-masters of the day.

I could scarcely restrain my feelings on hearing this, for, of course, after what I had heard, I imagined that I should go up suddenly into the nursery some fine morning, and catch "*La Petite Saqui*" doing with my little daughter the same as I had seen Mr. Risley do with his little boy—viz., lying down on her back, tossing up the little pet with the soles of her feet, and catching it again on the palms of her hand. However, I restrained my feelings, and determined to go round that very afternoon to the oilman, and give it him well for sending such a creature to me, with the character he did, and try if I could hear of any other girl in the neighbourhood.

Accordingly, as soon as my little angel of a Kate was fast asleep, I put on my bonnet, and stepped out. To make sure that neither of the girls could be up to any of their tricks in my absence, I took the key of the street door, and locked them both in.

I couldn't have been gone above half an hour, and when I got home again, I opened the door with as little noise as I could, in the hopes of seeing what the minxes had been doing in my absence. I had scarcely got half way down the passage, before—goodness gracious me!—if I didn't see "*La Petite Saqui,*" as the young monkey called itself, out in the garden, with my longest clothes-pole in her hand, figuring on a tight-rope, which she had made by tying my clothes line from the railings to the garden-seat.

Yes, there she was, now springing up in the air, and now coming down, and sitting on the rope for a minute, and then bounding up again, just like an Indian-rubber-ball, and then coming down again, and balancing herself on one leg, whilst she held the other out for a few seconds; and then running along the line towards the house as quick as she could put one foot over the other, and stopping suddenly, with a graceful curtsy, in the first position, just as I made my appearance at the back door. And when I went out into the garden, bless us and save us! if the place wasn't just like a fair, with all the servants round about stretching their necks out of the windows or poking their noses over the garden walls, and that fool of a maid-of-all-work of an Emma of mine, standing by looking on, with a ball of whiting in her hand, and her mouth wide open with wonder.

They no sooner saw me, than down jumped that fat lump of goods "*La Petite*

Saqui," and off she scampered, and I after her, all round the garden, with my parasol, trying to give it her well, amidst roars of laughter from all the servants looking on.

As for my tight-rope dancer, I wasn't long in getting her out of the house, for directly I caught her, I took her by the back of the neck, and, bundling her into the street, threw her bonnet out after her.

Then I went down-stairs, and told that stupid thing of an Emma, that if ever I caught her idling her time away, instead of minding her work — which, I was sure, was quite enough for her to do, and if it wasn't, I could easily find her some more—I 'd serve her just in the same way, and not give her a character into the bargain. For I felt that if a stop were not put to such goings-on, at their very commencement, that really there would be no saying to what lengths such a simpleton as Emma might not go.

All the stupid thing kept saying was, that I had promised her she was not to clean the boots and shoes, and knives and forks, and that she had had to do them ever since she had been with me—as if that had got anything to do with it. But my experience has taught me, that servants, directly one begins to find fault with anything they 've been doing, have a clever knack of bringing up against one any little indulgence that one may have foolishly promised them, and very naturally forgotten to carry out.

I told Miss Emma that she needn't be frightened about soiling her delicate hands with the blacking brushes, as she wouldn't have to do it much longer, for I had engaged a man who was to come in on the day after to-morrow, and would take the boots off her hands.

The publican sent me a very nice, sharp, active man, of the name of Richard Farden, though, he told me, he was better known as Dick Farden. He said, in the low London dialect, "He should be werry glad on the place, as it was just the thing he had been a looken out for for these three weeks gone, as his perfession didn't require looking arter till it were gone three, or so."

"Indeed!" I said, in the hopes that he would go on, for really the idea of a professional gentleman coming in to clean my boots and shoes did strike me as being somewhat singular. "And where may your place of business be?"

"Why, marm," he replied, twiddling his bushy whiskers, "you see, my place o' business is wery like this ere climate of ourn — wariable. Ven the brometer points to wery vet, then, on course, I knows that it 's a-going to be fine, and then I hangs out in Regent Street; and ven it stands at wery dry, then, as I knows it 's goin' to rain, I hemigrates to that there public humbrella, the Lowther Harcade."

As I could make neither head nor tail of what he said, my curiosity was excited all the more; so I told Edward, when he came home, of what a strange creature I had picked up to do the boots and shoes, and he appeared to be as much in the dark as I was; but, as he said, Mr. Dick Farden's business, whatever it was, could be no business of his, he wasn't going to bother his brains about it, so long as the man did his duty to his Wellingtons.

However, one evening, Edward informed me that he had found out who Mr. Dick Farden was: for as he was stopping to look into a print-shop in Regent Street, on his way home that afternoon, somebody tapped him on the shoulder, and said in his ear, "Do you want any prime cigars, noble captain?" and on turning round, who should it be but our out-door valet. When he recognised Edward, he only laughed and said, "I hope no offence, master? I merely wanted to do a bit of business in the smuggling line."

"Oh, dear me!" I cried. "You don't mean to say that we 've got a horrid wretch of a smuggler for a servant, now?"

"Lord bless you!" replied Edward; "don't go frightening yourself about that. You may depend upon it the fellow 's too knowing for that."

However, after what he had said, I wasn't going to be put off in that way, and told Edward that I would have the man up the very next morning, before him; and that if he couldn't give a good account of himself, why he should turn him out of the house then and there.

Next morning at breakfast, I declare I couldn't rest easy until we had Mr. Dick Farden up in the room, and when Edward reminded him of what had taken place the day before, the impudent fellow only stood there grinning and polishing the top of his oil-skin cap with his elbow, and saying that, of course,

a gentleman so well acquainted with London as my husband, was very well aware of what he was after. That he had got no contraband articles to dispose of, and wasn't such a stupid as to go infringing the laws, and running the chance of paying a hundred pounds odd for supplying the public with foreign articles, when many of them couldn't tell the difference between them and the real, genuine English goods.

And then the fellow went on and told us a whole pack of things,—how what he called his prime smuggled Havannahs were no more nor less than those that were imported from the extensive cabbage plantations of Fulham, into the snuff and tobacco manufactories in the Minories, and his very best pale or brown French cognac, and which he always warranted to his customers to be the very best that France could produce, was none other than the real spirit of the potato, commonly known by the name of British brandy; and the whole cargo of it that he had in his possession had been run in a splendid lugger of a chay-cart all the way from Smithfield; although, of course, to give it a genuine foreign flavour, he told the gentlemen a long cock-and-a-bull-story, as to how, at the perils of their lives, and at the outlay of upwards of a hundred pounds spent in bribing the revenue officers, he and his pals had succeeded in running it safe ashore at Deal, after a three hours' chase by one of the finest cutters in the revenue service.

After this, it was no very difficult matter to see that the man was no more a smuggler than I was, so I asked him how it was that the gentlemen were stupid enough to buy his things? But he very frankly told me the whole secret, saying, that as the parties whom he went up to were mostly young men from the counting-houses, he generally commenced by calling them "noble captains," because they liked to be thought to be in the army, and having tickled with this, he said the other part of the business was mere child's play—for the delicious flavour of a thing being foreign, together with the fine perfume of the idea that it was smuggled, was quite sufficient to make the youths of London buy and swallow anything.

As I saw he was inclined to go on, I wasn't going to spoil the fun by interrupting him; so he continued saying that the whole world had a taste for smuggling, and the ladies in particular; and for his part, if ever he had any idea of going into the real genuine smuggling profession, he told me that, from the observations he had made while following the imitation business, he should decidedly man all his cutters with women,—that was to say, provided they were "thin 'uns," as he elegantly expressed it,—for, of course, if the ladies were stout, the extension of their figures with any foreign produce would not only raise the suspicions of the officers, but likewise prevent their getting easily through the custom-house, while, if the angels were slightly made, nothing was simpler than to fatten the poor spare things with lace, or to pad them into perfect Venuses with white kid gloves. Indeed, he said, the corset-makers, knowing the natural propensity of the female sex for contraband goods, seemed to have designed one article of feminine attire simply with a view of defrauding the custom-house; for he had heard of one old lady who had brought home in her bustle alone (and which, asking my pardon, he said was the article of feminine attire that he alluded to) twelve yards of the best French velvet—upwards of forty-two of Valenciennes lace—a dozen of cambric pocket-handkerchiefs—and three dozen of white kid gloves—nine pair of silk stockings—a pair of stays—and a wig. But, to be sure, he added, she was a "werry thin 'un, Mam,"—insomuch so, indeed, that had Captain Johnson, or any other eminent smuggler, known of her natural propensity for infringing the laws, he would have given her any sum she might name to have entered his service; for, positively and truly, she would have taken any amount of foreign produce, and would have borne cramming as well as a turkey.

I declare the man was such a chatter-box, that I verily believe he would have gone on talking for a twelvemonth, if we had only let him. But as I saw that he was determined to say all he could against my sex, of course I wasn't going to sit quietly there and listen to it, while Mr. Edward kept chuckling at all he said against the women, like a ninny; so I told Mr. Dick Farden that he had better go down-stairs, and look after the knives, though really it would, in the end, have been much better for me if I had turned him out of the house on the spot; for

—But as Mr. Savill, my bothering printer, tells me that he can't possibly squeeze any more of my domestic distresses into this number, why, my gentle readers must wait till the next month before they learn how Mr. Dick Farden served me, after all.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE ABOUT *that* MR. DICK FARDEN—HOW REALLY AND TRULY THERE WAS NO TRUSTING THE FELLOW TO DO A SINGLE THING, FOR POSITIVELY HE SPOILT EVERYTHING HE PUT HIS HAND TO, (IF, INDEED, TO DO THE MAN JUSTICE, I EXCEPT THE BOOTS AND KNIVES)—AND HOW, WHEN AT LAST HE SO COMPLETELY RUINED MY LOVE OF A PIANO, THAT ACTUALLY MY "BROAD-WOOD" WAS ONLY FIT FOR FIRE-WOOD, (IF THAT,) I WISHED TO GOODNESS GRACIOUS I HAD BEEN A MAN FOR HIS SAKE—BUT AS IT WAS, I MERELY TOLD HIM THAT SUCH GOINGS ON WOULD NOT SUIT *me*, AND THAT HE HAD BETTER GO AND PLAY HIS PRANKS ELSEWHERE, FOR I WASN'T GOING TO PUT UP WITH THEM ANY LONGER, I COULD TELL HIM.

"He seemed confounded—vexed—he stared—
Then vow'd he'd ne'er deceive me;
Says I, 'Your presence can be spared,
Sir, if you please, do leave me.'"

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"Now pray," says I, "don't teaze, young man,
You don't exactly suit me."

"YOU DON'T EXACTLY SUIT ME."
G. Herbert Rodwell.

THE courteous reader will perhaps recollect that Mr. Savill, my bothering printer (as I couldn't help calling him last month), came in, just at the most interesting part of my narrative about Mr. Dick Farden, and in a most unrelenting manner cut short the thread of my tale with the scissors: "of want of space." Not that I should have minded so much about it, only the worst of it was, I had warmed so nicely into my story, and really had grown so hot upon it, just at the very moment when in walked Mr. Savill, to throw cold water upon me, with his precious "No more room, ma'am." And it isn't easy for a person of poetic mind to have to warm up her feelings a second time, as if the heart were so much cold mutton, or beef, or pork; although, for the matter of that, I think my fair readers will agree with me that pork makes but an indifferent hash, and that nothing on earth can be nicer than a cold boiled leg with a nice mixed pickle, especially in summer time, when hot joints are so disagreeable.

Well, but I think I hear the reader exclaiming, "Goodness gracious, my dear Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, you are allowing your fertile imagination to run away with you, and you have so interested us with your sufferings, that our only happiness lies in listening to your miseries." So, "*revenons à nos moutons*," and Mr. Dick Farden's capers.

Certainly the man had a great deal to answer for. His whole life seemed to have been one round of juggling, and imposition, and deceit. Not that I would visit all the blame upon him, for, from what I could learn, his good-for-nothing father really seemed to have been no better than he should have been. Indeed, Mr. Dick Farden told me one day, while he was rubbing down our dining-room table, that "his old governor" (as he called his paternal parent) had originally been in the hair-dressing, shaving, and perfuming line, and had at one time the heads of at least a hundred families in his care, and the chins of half an entire parish under his hands. Consequently, Mr. Farden, sen., did a very extensive business in "Macassars," "Circassian creams," "Balm of Columbias," "Botanic Waters," and other only safe and speedy means by which baldness is effectually removed, and the hair renovated, beautified, and preserved; for whilst he was cutting and curling his customers, he used invariably to persuade them that their locks were thinning and falling off dreadfully, and that the hair, being nothing more nor less than a vegetable, and the head merely the field in which it sprouted, of course, whenever the crops were cut, it stood to reason that the soil required manuring with a good top-dressing of bear's grease, while the roots of the plants naturally needed being occasionally irrigated with "botanic water;" adding, that the days were shortly coming when the barber would be ranked with the farmer, and looked upon as the tiller of the head, or hairgriculturist.

Accordingly, Mr. Dick Farden, sen., finding that his eloquence as to the virtues of the artificial manures for the hair was adding considerably to the incomes of Messrs. Rowland, Ross, Gosnell, and others, it struck him that it was merely a duty he owed to his family to devise some guano for the head which should make

his own fortune. So he plunged head over ears into bear's grease, and kept a manufactory and two roaring Russians in a cage in his front kitchen, so that the passers-by might see through the area gratings the brace of hairy monsters walking backwards and forwards, just where the dresser used to be, and thus have ocular demonstration that he dealt only in the genuine article; while, at the end of his garden, he fitted up a very commodious stye for the fattening of pigs: for, as he said very truly, if bald people were partial to the fat of the bear merely on account of the strength of the hair that grew on the back of that animal, surely good, wholesome pig's fat would be twice as serviceable to them, seeing that that domestic creature bore nothing weaker than bristles. Consequently, Mr. Farden, sen., now turned his thoughts chiefly to the growth of lard and sale of genuine bear's grease; and whenever he killed a fat pig, he used to paste up outside his door a large placard, with, "ANOTHER FINE YOUNG BEAR JUST SLAUGHTERED," printed upon it; whilst in his shop window he suspended the body of the defunct porker, dexterously served up in a beautiful bear's skin that he always kept by him on purpose, and with a card hung with blue ribbon round his neck, on which was written, "REAL GENUINE BEAR'S GREASE, CUT FROM THE CARCASS, AT ONLY 1s. 6*d.* PER POUND." As Dick Farden said, "his governor's" business was very profitable, but very unpleasant, for the exhibition of the two savage monsters in the kitchen, and the domestic animal in the window, raised such a demand for real bear's grease in the neighbourhood, that the family had nothing but pork for dinner all the year round.

To his father's business our Dick Farden in course of time succeeded, but being of a wild and roving turn of mind, he paid little or no attention to the pigs, and as he said, "he went it so fast that he wasn't long in going through 'Farden's magic grease,'" so that in a very little time, the sheriff walked into the shop, and seized the two bears in the kitchen, together with all the wigs, scalps, and moustachios, he had on the premises. But this, he said, he thought he might have got over, had he not unfortunately distrained upon several ladies' front ringlets which he had been intrusted with to bake, and which he regretted to say, being taken for the benefit of the creditors, obliged him to fly the neighbourhood, and seek a living elsewhere. After this sad affair, things went very crooked with him, and he said that often and often he had been so put to it, that he would have given anything for a mouthful of the crackling of the fine young bears that he used once to turn his nose up at; and he said he must have tried, what he called "no end of dodges," to earn an honest living, but all to no good, until one day he fell in with a gentleman over his pipe at the "White Hart," who persuaded him to join him in the British smuggling line: for as the gentleman, who seemed to be a perfect man of the world, and to have a wonderfully fine knowledge of the female portion of human nature, expressed it: "You had only to make the ladies believe that you had got several extraordinary bargains, in the shape of cambrics, gloves, or lace, which you could let them have at fifty per cent. under prime cost, and they would buy cart-loads, whether they wanted them or not, and never trouble their dear heads as to whether they were honestly come by." In fact, he knew scores and scores of enterprising linendrapers, who had made large fortunes by ruining themselves regularly once a twelvemonth, and selling off the whole of their stock, by order of the assignees, for the benefit of the creditors in general, and ladies in particular. For he said it was well-known among the gentlemen in the haberdashery line, that the ladies would never enter a linendraper's shop so long as he asked only a fair profit on his wares; whereas, if he would only make them believe that he was going to the dogs, and that he was selling off his goods for full half less than they were ever made for, down they would come in swarms, as fast as their limbs, cabs, and carriages, would carry them, and pay whatever prices the spirited proprietor might please to ask. For the idea of "ANOTHER EXTENSIVE FAILURE" seemed to have such a charm to the women, that the only way by which a linendraper could keep himself solvent, was by declaring himself bankrupt, especially as the darling creatures evidently looked upon it as a religious duty to attend every "AWFUL SACRIFICE," for nothing seemed to them to be so noble as the notion of a man's immolating himself at the shrine of Basinghall-street for the love of the fair sex. Indeed, they appeared to be the very reverse of ungrateful rats, and instead of leaving a house just as it's about to tumble to pieces, they seemed to be more like owls, and love to

haunt "ruins," or rather, he might say, they were the very image of Cornwall wreckers, and would, in answer to the very first placard that was hung out as a signal of distress by the stranded linendraper, rush down in hundreds to see what remnants they could pick up, or get out of the wreck, before the whole concern went to pieces.

Mr. Dick Farden then informed me, that upon this advice he had devoted his labours entirely to the fair sex, and immediately embarked in the "bargain line." Knowing that the ladies had a natural aversion to parting with their money, and preferred exchanging their dear husbands' left-off wearing apparel, he made a feeble endeavour to convert old clothes into the current coin of the realm, by carrying about on his arm a beautiful little love of a tame squirrel, which he offered to the passers-by at the low price of a worn-out surtout, and a wonderful piping bullfinch for the exceedingly small charge of a cast-off pair of trousers and a waistcoat. In the winter, however, he carried with him a basket of Derbyshire Spa chimney ornaments, with a few glasses and jugs and basins hanging round it. With these, he said, he managed very well; for he could furnish a sweet pretty mantelpiece very elegantly for a lady, with a great-coat in the middle, and an umbrella on one side, and a mackintosh on the other; while he believed that, through his humble means, several husbands had often washed their faces in their old hats, and sipped their gin and water out of their worn-out boots.

By these means he raised money enough to purchase a cargo of contraband goods in the Minories, and succeeded in running them safe into a public-house in the neighbourhood of Regent street, the sale of which goods occupied his afternoon; while, he added, with a stupid grin on his face, he was proud to say his mornings were devoted to the polishing of our boots and shoes, and knives; for, thank goodness, he continued, there was no pride in him, and he was always willing to pick up a sixpence any day, any how; so that now he could look any of his creditors in the face, and had no need to be, as he so repeatedly was after his father's death, *non est inventus;* though, for the matter of that, Mr. Carstairs, who was one of the most beautiful writers of the day, very truly said—"A *honest* man 's the noblest work of Natur."

I am very much afraid I 've been wasting a great deal of my own valuable time and space, and of my courteous reader's equally valuable patience, in giving all I could learn of the history of this worthless man; only my dear Edward (who is obstinate as a mule) would have it that Dick Farden was quite a character, although I must say that if he was a character, he was a very bad one; and I declare the way in which he served me and my sweet piano is quite heart-rending to think of; but I will tell the reader all about this in its proper place. Though I can't help adding, that it was quite as much the work of my dear Edward (who, it pains me to state, always will have his own way, and *of course* always *must* be in the right) as it was the work of Mr. Dick Farden, (who certainly was one of the clumsiest and stupidest men that I ever came nigh,) for if Mr. Sk—n—st—n would only have allowed me to have packed the man out of the house when *I* wanted, of course it never would have happened, and I should have had my sweet Broadwood in my possession at this very minute; but the reader knows as well as I do that what can't be cured must be endured; so I shall say no more about the piano until I touch upon it in the due course of things; for I 've quite made up my mind to the loss of the thing a long time ago, and the least said is the soonest mended; still I can't help adding, that I wish to goodness gracious that I had never set eyes upon that awkward booby of a Mr. Dick Farden, or that that perverse, headstrong (though good at times) husband of mine would not go interfering about the servants, but just allow me to deal with them as I please, and manage my own affairs myself: for I should be glad to know how he would like me to go meddling with his clerks, indeed. In conclusion, I can only say that the circumstance affected me so much at the time, that I only prayed for one thing; and that was, that the laws would have allowed me to have had the vagabond transported, as they ought to have done, or at the very least have compelled the man to have given me a new piano, value seventy-five guineas, which I was assured was the cost of ours when it was new, though for myself I can't speak positively to the fact; for, to tell the truth, we bought it second-hand.

But methinks I hear the reader saying, what about the piano? You are again forgetting yourself, Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, and allowing your naturally fine, warm

feelings to make you wander from your subject. *C'est vrai—vous avez raison*, courteous reader.

Well, then, the fact is, I never was fond of needlework at the best of times, and really and truly, I never could see the fun of passing the heyday of one's youth darning stockings, and cobbling up a pack of old clothes, as full of holes as a cinder shovel. So I longed to have an instrument just to amuse myself with for an hour or two in the day, or play over an air or two to Edward of an evening. And it wasn't as if I hadn't got any music-books; besides I really and truly was sick and tired of doing kettle-holders, and working a pack of copper kettles in Berlin wool, with a stupid "Mind it boils," underneath them; or else working a lot of braces and slippers for Edward, which, in his vulgar way, he said were too fine by half for use; or else sitting for hours with your toe up in the air, netting purses, and spending a mint of money in steel beads for a pack of people that you didn't care twopence about, and who never gave you so much as a trumpery ring or brooch in return (I hate such meanness). So I wouldn't let Edward have any peace until he promised to get me a piano; for, as I very truly observed, I had been out of practice so long, that I should be very much surprised if, on sitting down to a piano, I didn't find the cries of the wounded in the "Battle of Prague" too much for me, and I was sure that I should break down in the runs in the "Bird Waltz," even supposing I was able to manage the shakes. And as for the matter of my voice, I told him I had serious alarms about losing my G, and if I did I should never forgive myself, after the money that had been spent on my musical education at Boulogne-sur-mer alone, and I was sure that if I had to begin anew with my singing exercises, and was to be put in the scales again, that I should be found wanting. Besides, I concluded the business by giving him to understand, that it wasn't so much for myself that I wanted the piano, after all, but of course my darling little toodle-loodle-loo of a Kate, in two or three years at least, must have an instrument to begin practising upon, and if he didn't get one before that, I was sure I shouldn't be able to tell the difference between A flat and a bull's foot, and he would have to go to I know not what expenses in masters for her, and then he would be ready to cut his ears off for not having got me a piano when I begged of him.

I am happy to say that Edward for once was not deaf to reason, but seeing that I wanted the piano more out of love for little Kate than from any selfish motive on my part, he very properly consented to look out one for me; although my gentleman couldn't let well alone, but must go cutting his stupid jokes, saying that he was very much afraid that the piano was only "one for the pot" over again: but I very quickly silenced my lord by merely exclaiming, in my most sarcastic way, "Fiddle."

However, of course, as usual, Mr. Sk—n—st—n, if ever he does consent to do a good action, must go spoiling it by doing the thing by halves; for instead of going and ordering me one of Broadwood's very best new grand uprights, he must needs go poking into all the sale-rooms in London, until he fell in with a trumpery second-hand cottage, and which I had to have French polished all outside, and thoroughly repaired and done up in, before I could do anything with it, for I declare when I came to go over it, half of the keys of the cottage were of no use. Still, thank goodness, it was a Broadwood, although no one would have thought it, if they had seen it in the state in which it came home to me; for a Broadwood, I think it had the most disgraceful legs I ever saw in my life, and it wasn't until I had had the whole thing thoroughly cleaned and put in order, that it was fit to be seen in any respectable person's dining-room.

When I had spent nearly a fortune upon it, I must confess that it wasn't so bad after all; indeed, no one would have known it again, and I've over and over again seen very many worse in the houses of persons far better off in the world than ourselves, but whose names, for many reasons, of course, I'm not going to state. Certainly its tone was heavenly, and, upon my word, when it came home newly done up, and I ran over "The Soldier Tired," I declare it sounded for all the world like the music of the spheres—such grandeur in the lower notes—such sweetness in the upper ones—such power when you were impassioned—such plaintiveness when you were sentimental—that I declare it seemed to go right through me, and be more than I could bear, for it would move me to tears; and as I playfully ran up and down the notes, really and truly I felt myself lifted from my seat, and carried, without knowing it, into another region—Oh! it was such

a little duck of a cottage, and such a darling little pet of a dear Broadwood, the reader can't tell!

I don't suppose I could have had the cottage in the house more than a fortnight, before I began to feel that it was a sin to be possessed of such a beautifully toned instrument, and not give a party just to show it off—for really the quadrilles upon it sounded quite divinely—and if they did so under my humble fingers, I said to myself, what would they sound like under the more skilful execution of those sweet girls and admirable piano-forte players, the Miss B—yl—s's, who I knew very well would be delighted to take it in turns, and play the whole evening through for me. Besides, it wasn't as if we had been seeing a whole house full of company every evening; on the contrary, I'm sure we had been living as retired as owls, and hadn't given a party for I couldn't safely say when, and I do think it is so dreadful to be obliged to sit moping, locked up in a box all day long, without ever seeing a single soul beyond the people you've got about you. Moreover, as I very properly observed to myself, it really was not left for us to say whether we liked to give a party or not; but, upon my word, when I looked at it again, I felt that it was a moral obligation, and nothing more nor less than a matter of common honesty on our side to do so; for, of course, having danced at all our friends' houses, and eaten all our friends' suppers, they naturally expected that we should make them some return, as indeed, in plain justice, we ought to; besides, how could we hope that we should ever be asked out to our friends again, if we didn't give them supper for supper and dance for dance. I told Edward, too, that really and truly it would be little or no expense, for we should only want such a small supper that a five pound note would cover it all, I was sure; for I merely intended just to have a ham and beef sandwich or two for the top and bottom, and a chicken or so prettily done up in blue satin ribbon, as if it had been had from the pastry-cooks; and then for the matter of confectionary, of course we might have a trifle from Camden Town for a mere nothing, and that with, say one or two custards, and a jelly, would make quite show enough for what we wanted, I was certain; besides, I could easily fill out the table with a few almonds, and raisins, and figs, and candied lemon peel, for, as I very properly said, there was no necessity for our going to the foolish expense of grapes, and surely they could do without crackers for once in a way, and if they couldn't, why they wouldn't have them, that was all I knew. And even then, supposing that upon second thoughts we didn't fancy the table looked crowded and showy enough, why I could easily make a bargain with the pastrycook for the hire of some of their fancy articles, either a beautiful elephant in pound-cake, or a love of a barley-sugar bird-cage, and which we must take care and not press our friends to taste, and then with Edward's two beautiful plated candelabras with silver edges, I was sure it would be as handsome an entertainment as any one could wish for; and if it wasn't, why all I could say was, that I wasn't going to any more expense about the matter,—no! not if the Queen herself were coming—and there's an end of it!

Well, it was all so nicely arranged, and I sent out all my invitations in such good time, that I think I had only eight refusals, and those not from the *best* of our acquaintance, so I didn't break my heart about them. But, as I very truly said to myself, I may as well have my rooms full whilst I am about it, so I packed off a card to some of my friends that I didn't care very much for, and whom I had consequently made up my mind not to ask at all, with a note apologising for the shortness of the notice, and telling them that owing to the letter having been misdirected, the invitation I had sent them three weeks back had just been returned to me by the post-office.

Upon my word, the preparations for the party were almost too much for me, and I declare to gracious I worked like a common cab-horse, for I hadn't even time to sit down and take my meals decently, like a Christian; and when I went to bed, I can assure my lady-readers, I was *so* tired, that I made a vow to myself that even if the whole world depended upon it, I'd never again be dragged into giving another party,—no, not for ever so much! But I shouldn't have minded it a very great deal after all, if it hadn't been for Mr. Sk—n—st—n's shameful behaviour, and total want of sympathy with my sufferings—for really and truly, if he hadn't the bare-faced impudence to tell me that I had only myself to blame for it; for that "*I* (*I*, indeed!) was always bothering his life out about giving a party," when all the while the wretch must have known, as well as I did, that it wasn't for

myself that I wanted any of your parties, but merely to oblige him, by keeping all *his* friends and clients together. But, of course, these are just the thanks one gets for slaving one's life out, as one does, for the sake of one's husband. It's always the way with those selfish things of men, though. Mr. Edward, however, wont catch his dear (pretty dear) Caroline making such a fool of herself again in a hurry—No! not if she knows it.

As our look-out at the back is far from pretty, and to tell the truth never did please me, (for we had only a view of these Simmonds' trumpery garden, and they are always washing at-home, and hanging the things out to dry right under our very noses) why, I thought (as I always had been, from my cradle, of an ingenious turn of mind) that I might as well ornament our staircase-window just a little bit, and so shut out that dreadful eyesore which we had at the back of us, and make the window quite a handsome object; for I must say, that of all things in the world for a staircase, give me a stained glass window. Oh! I do think it looks so beautiful—so rich and *distingué*, to see bunches of roses, and pinks, and camelias, painted on ground glass, just for all the world as if they were growing there. So I set to work, and having a pair of old worn-out chintz bed-curtains up stairs, I cut out some of the best flowers that had had the least of their colour washed out of them, and dabbed some putty over all the panes, until, I declare to goodness gracious, a glazier himself would have sworn that the glass had been ground. Then, with some gum I stuck the chintz flowers in the centre of every one of the panes, and, upon my honour, I can assure the reader, it was the most perfect bit of deception I ever saw in all my life; and I'll warrant, that even the best judges in stained glass would have had to have passed their fingers over the surface, before they would have been able to have found it out. As any one came in at our street-door, it positively gave the house quite a cathedral air. Oh! it was so beautiful, so chaste, and yet so rich; and when I first saw it from our hall, I couldn't for the life of me help exclaiming, with the top of the bills of the Colosseum—" 'Tis not a picture—it is nature." Yet, when I think of what happened afterwards, I declare I feel as if I could sit down and cry my eyes out—but more of this hereafter.

Well, I got all the plate nicely cleaned, and all the carpets taken up, and all the papers cut for the wax candles, and the chandelier taken out of its brown holland bag, and had ordered the rout-seats, and the flowers, and the chickens, and the barley-sugar bird-cage (which I thought would look best after all, for the man hadn't a single elephant in his shop that he said would be large enough to place in the middle of the supper-table, and wanted to put me off with a trumpery hedgehog, with half its almond quills out, and which I could very easily see, from the stale look of the thing, had been out to an evening party every night that week.) The only thing that remained to be done was to get that lovely cottage of mine up into the drawing-room, and how the dickens we were ever to manage it, I'm sure I couldn't tell. When I asked Mr. Edward about it, as he was decantering his wine at the sideboard, before he went to business, on the morning of the party, and inquired of him whether he didn't think Dick Farden could manage it for me, he merely said, stuff-a'-nonsense, I had better have proper people to do it, and then I should be sure to have it done rightly; on which I very justly remarked—"Proper people, indeed! did he know what proper people would come to? He seemed to be talking as if he had got more money in his pockets than he knew what to do with; and I should just like to know what on earth was the use of having Mr. Dick Farden always about the house, if he couldn't be trusted to move my cottage just from one room to another." This brought him to his senses, for he said, as I seemed to know so much more about it than he did, I had better do as I liked—only he must go spoiling it, by adding, in his perverse way, "that I mustn't go blame him if any thing happened to it." —But I *do* blame him for it all, and can't help saying, that it was entirely his own fault, for what business had he to tell me that I knew more about it than he did, and that I had better do it as I liked, when he must have known, as well as I did, that I knew nothing at all about moving cottages, and that something dreadful was going to happen. Oh! that dear, dear Broadwood of mine. But I must restrain myself.

Well, no sooner had I seen my husband fairly out of the house, than I rang the bell for Mr. Dick Farden, and when he came into the parlour, I asked him if

he thought he could manage to move that piano of mine up into the drawing-room. So, after measuring the width of it, and then going and looking at our first landing, he said, "he was afeard there would be no getting the thing up the stairs anyhow, for there was no room to turn the corner with it;" and, on going up and looking for myself, sure enough the man was right; though as I told him, what on earth could make the people go building houses in that stupid way, was beyond a person of my limited understanding to comprehend. Dick Farden said that there were only two ways of getting over it, one was to take out my beautiful painted glass window, (which of course I wasn't going to listen to—though I can't help wishing now, from the very bottom of my heart, that I had); and the other to "hoist it up" outside the back of the house, and so get in at the French window in the drawing-room, which, he said, he and a "pal" of his, as he called him, could do very easily for a pot of beer. I asked him whether he was sure that it would be perfectly safe; but he would have it that there was not the least danger, so long as the ropes were good. So I showed him the clothes lines, but my gentleman wanted to persuade me that it would be better to have them just a trifle thicker—though of course I knew what that all meant, and wasn't going to be foolish enough to give him the money to go buying new ropes with, indeed, and making a pretty penny out of them, I'd be bound. So I quietly told him that as those very ropes had been strong enough to bear the weight of "La petite Saqui," (and she was no feather,) jumping and frisking about on them, I thought they might manage to lift my Broadwood up to the drawing-room window—though, of course, like master like man, he must go saying, as Mr. Edward did, that I mus'n't blame him if anything happened on account of the ropes,—and really, from their all talking so about something happening, I positively began to fancy that something *was* going to happen, (and so it *was*, too, with a vengeance,) and what I should do then goodness gracious only knows.

Off scampered Mr. Dick Farden for his friend, and I gave him permission to bring the beer in with him, for of course he couldn't do a thing without tasting his beer first. I declare I never knew such a pig for beer as the man was in all my life; he couldn't do anything beyond his everyday work without looking for something to drink; in fact, if I asked him to do ever such a trifle, he was always saying, in a begging tone, "You haven't got such a thing as a pint of beer about you, have you, ma'am?"

When he came back, he and his friend, whom he called Jim, carried my cottage out into the garden; and when they had tied the clothes line all round it, Jim went up stairs to the second-floor window, and threw out a string for us to tie the end of the rope to. As soon as he had got hold of it, Mr. Farden tied what he called the "guider" to one of the legs of my Broadwood, so as to prevent its knocking against the house as it went up. When they were all ready, Farden called out to Jim, "Now, pull steady, lad!" and up went my beautiful cottage in the air, as nicely as ever I saw anything done in all my life. Just as they had got it well over the area railings, and nearly on a level with our back-parlour window, that bothering Jim, who was as strong as a bull, began pulling too hard, and I saw that it was more than Farden could manage to keep the piano away from the house, and that in another minute I should be having it going bang in at our back-parlour window, and perhaps lodging right on the top of the sideboard, where I had put all the jellies and custards not ten minutes before. So I gave a slight scream, and ran up to him as fast as my legs could carry me, and seizing hold of the guider, told him, for goodness gracious sake, to pull the piano over towards the garden wall. But I declare the words were no sooner out of my mouth, than away he must tear, pulling away as hard as ever he could, just for all the world as if my beautiful instrument were made of cast iron, and he had no sooner got it opposite my beautiful staircase window, than all of a sudden off flew the leg of my Broadwood to which the guide rope was attached, and down he tumbled, and I with him; and ah, lor a mercy! I heard something go bang, smash, crash, and on looking up, oh dear! there was my lovely cottage gone right through my beautiful imitation-stained glass window, and dashing backwards and forwards, for all the world like one of those great big swings at a fair, and knocking against the window, as Jim kept pulling it up, until there wasn't scarcely a bit of the frame or glass left standing. Lord love you, out came all the neighbours' servants, in a swarm, just like a pack of bees at the sound of a gong; and

I'd be bound to say they thought it a fine bit of fun, and a sight worth going a mile any day to see. Farden hallooed out as loud as he could, "Hold hard there, Jim!" but Jim (the stupid!) being, as I afterwards learnt, rather hard of hearing, only kept pulling and pulling as fast as Mr. Farden kept saying, "Hold hard there, will you, Jim; I tell you the rope's cut!" And sure enough so it had been, by the broken glass; and as I looked at it, I could see thread by thread giving way, until at last, when it was very nearly on a level with our drawing-room window, snap went the clothes lines — and oh! was ever poor woman born to be so tormented before! down came my lovely cottage, like a thunder-clap, on to the top of our water-butt, which it upset, so that as my beautiful Broadwood fell smash upon the stones in the yard, whop came that great big heavy water-butt right upon it, crashing it all to shivers, and shooting the whole of its contents, for all the world like a torrent, into both of our kitchens, and flooding the whole place at least two pattens deep I declare—

When we went up stairs to look after that deaf scoundrel of a Jim, oh lud! if the breaking of the rope hadn't thrown him back into my darling little Kitty's beautiful cradle, and as I said to myself, I am sure it was a perfect mercy that the poor dear innocent angel hadn't been sleeping there at the time, or that heavy lout of a Jim must have killed her on the spot, and as it was, there were all the wicker work ribs of the thing broken in, so that it was impossible ever to think of letting her sleep in it again, for really and truly, it looked more like an old hamper than a respectable baby's bassinet.

As for the party, it was next to madness to think another moment about that, for when you hadn't a piano, or a window on the staircase left, I should like to know how it would ever be possible to have a nice comfortable dance; so after I had given it to Mr. Dick Farden well, and told him that I should certainly make a point of stopping the piano out of his wages, and after I had packed Mr. Jim off home to his family with a flea in his ear, there was I obliged in my state of mind to sit down, and scribble off a lot of story-telling letters to all the friends I had invited, saying, that owing to my sweet Kitty's having been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, I regretted to say that I was compelled to postpone the pleasure of seeing them until some future period, and bundling Mr. Dick Farden into a cab, told him to make as much haste as ever he could and deliver them, though I do verily believe, that from the number of knocks and cabs and hackney coaches that came to the door that dreadful evening, that he put the better part of the fare in his pocket, and never delivered many of them at all; and there was I, obliged to come down every five minutes, from ten till twelve in the evening, and put on a very long face, and tell a pack of taradiddles about the sufferings of my sweet little angel of a Kitty, and how we didn't expect her to live the whole night through, when actually the little pet was fast asleep in my bed and as well as she had been ever since she was born; and upon my word, it really made my heart bleed to have to send the dear creatures home again, when I saw how nicely their hairs were done, and the expense they had gone to about their dresses, for they had evidently come out determined upon spending a very pleasant evening.

Edward, on his return home, I regret to say, forgot himself as a gentleman and my husband. At one time I thought he had gone clean out of his wits, for he had the impudence to say, that I seemed to take a delight in throwing twenty pounds in the street, and that it was all my fault, and none of it Dick Farden's, and that he would take good care that if ever I wanted any more music, I might whistle for it; and that as for any more pianos, that the next one I had, should come out of my own pocket. As I saw that he wouldn't be happy until we had had a good quarrel, I thought it best to go off into hysterics, and laughed and sobbed in such a dreadful way that I soon brought him to his senses, and made him begin kissing me, and calling me his dear, foolish, thoughtless Caroline, and telling me to calm myself for heaven's sake, or I should be laying myself up. But then it came to my turn, for I wasn't going to let him abuse me like a pickpocket one minute, and make friends with him the next, and I do think that I never should have opened my lips civilly to him again, if he hadn't brought me home a beautiful Gros de Naples dress, and so showed that he felt he was in the wrong, and was sorry for what he had done.

It was a hard struggle for a person like me, to bring myself ever to look upon that Dick Farden with any pleasure again: for I declare the next morning when

he came into the house, I thought I never saw such a low, vulgar, mean, sly, disreputable looking face in all my life, with his ringlets dangling at his temples, and which he seemed to be as proud of as a life-guardsman is of his moustachios; positively the man was always twiddling either them or his whiskers, and what on earth a fellow like him could ever have wanted with a couple of corkscrews at the side of his forehead is more than I can say; and, la! if they were not as greasy as though they had been twisted round tallow candles! It wasn't only the fellow's looks, too, that I had to complain of; but, do what I would, I could never prevent him from going about the kitchen, or standing in the knife-house, whistling his "Jim Crows," and "Such a getting up stairs," and a pack of other low, unmeaning "nigger" songs, that I 'm sure I never could see either the fun or the beauty of. Again, if ever I gave him any of Edward's clothes to brush, there he would be, hissing and fizzing away over them like a bottle of ginger-beer in warm weather; and indeed it always was and ever will be a riddle to me what those boots and ostlers can want making all that fuss and noise over their work, as if they were slaving as hard as steam-engines, and obliged to let the steam off, for fear of bursting. I declare whenever I hear them doing it, I feel as if I could go up behind them and give them a good shaking, that I do. It 's nothing more than "great cry and little wool," and that 's the plain truth of it.

I can assure the reader it would have been much better for me in the long-run, if I had packed the fellow out of the house immediately after the accident (as indeed I was as near doing as two pins). Only, of course, in my stupid, kind way, I must go letting my good-nature get the upper hand of my judgment, and endeavouring to read the gentleman a strong lesson, just to teach him how to lift a simple piano for the future, by making him pay a good part of his wages towards buying me a new one in the place of that which he had so wickedly broken. For I 've always made it a rule to make my servants pay for breakages, as it 's all very fine for a parcel of wiseacres to tell you that we are every one of us liable to accidents, but my answer to such stuff as that, has always been, "Don't tell me, I know a great deal better — and that servants, one and all, are never happy, unless they can be knocking your things about like ninepins, and the only way to let them understand that they cost money, is to make them pay for what they '*couldn't help*' breaking." (Couldn't help it, couldn't they — I never knew such couldn't helps!) Besides, who ever heard of ladies banging the teacups and wineglasses about, as if they were made of cast-iron, or pouring boiling water into your very best decanters, as though they were foot-baths. Now look at me! why, I 'm sure that, without exaggeration, the things I 've broken in my time might be put in a nut-shell—but then *I* knew that they all cost money, and consequently, never was a "butter-fingers."

However, to talk of another object; I 'd been having a whole string of little draggle-tail girls in to nurse my little Kitty for me of a day, but I declare they were all the very counterpart of that "La petite Saqui," and as dirty and slovenly as dirty and slovenly could be—with their nasty, rusty little old shawl just thrown over their necks, and their cotton gowns with all the colour washed out, excepting where the tuck had been let down, and there it was bright enough, heaven knows! Upon my word, too, they were as careless of my poor little dear, as though it had been a doll made out of wood; and the worst of it was, they were all of them so sly and deceitful, and always kissing and fondling the little pet to my face, though directly my back was turned, they would go knocking it about, and eating up, like a set of greedy pigs, all the sugar I had given out for the angel's pap. I declare to goodness gracious, whenever they took the child out for an airing, it was a perfect agony to me, for I used to sit upon pins and needles, expecting every knock that came to the door, would be my little cherub brought home on a shutter, and I should find out that it had either been run over, or dropped into the canal, or tossed by a mad bull, or something equally pleasant to a fond mother's feelings. So I told Edward very quietly, that for the sake of a trumpery five-pound note a year, I wasn't going to be torn to pieces in the manner I was every hour of my life; and that I had made up my mind to have a regular nurse, who, at least, would be some credit to the family, and on whom I could place some little dependence. Besides, I said with great truth, I was certain we should find a decent, clean woman would be a positive saving in the long

run, if it was only in the matter of the baby's washing—which really seemed to be an expense that there was no end to—for even if I were to put ten frocks on the little angel every day, I assured him it would be as grubby as a chimney-sweeper's child, all the same; and as for the matter of eating, I would back a good strong growing girl, that's out in the open air half her time, to get through twice as much, if not more, than a full-grown respectable woman, any day.

Accordingly, I set about looking out for a nurse; and as I had several times, when I had gone out to take a walk and look at the shops in Regent-street, noticed what seemed to me a very nice servants' institution in Oxford-street, and although I had never tried anything of the kind before, still, as I knew they professed a great deal, and made out that they were a great protection to housekeepers against fraud, and said a whole host of other grand things into the bargain—why, I thought I might as well just try that means of getting a servant for once—though I couldn't help saying to myself at the time, "Fine words butter no parsnips;" but, for the matter of that, how any other kind of words could, was always a mystery to me. Besides, it is such an expense, putting advertisement after advertisement in the *Times;* and certainly the "Institution" would save me a deal of trouble, as well as four or five rows of postage stamps, in writing, prepaid, to a whole regiment of A. B.'s, who, after all, might never suit you.

However, before I set about taking any steps towards suiting myself with a nurse, I made up my mind that I would have a grass-plot laid down in our garden, at the back of our house, where the nurse could let the child roll about, and no harm could possibly come to it, as I should always have the little pet under my own eye, instead of being obliged to send it a quarter of a mile off at least, to that bothering Regent's Park, where the soldiers, and a parcel of other idle, good-looking vagabonds, made it quite as dangerous for the nurse as it was for the child. Besides, it wasn't as if that garden of ours at the back of the house was of any use to us; and, goodness knows, if it wasn't useful, it wasn't ornamental, to say the least of it! I declare it was almost a match for the plantation in Leicester-square; and, mercy me! I never saw such a place as that is—with its grubby shrubbery, and its trees dingy—for all the world like so many birch-brooms, with an old tea-leaf or two sticking to the end of them—and that sooty statue on horseback perched up in the centre, and looking just like a coalheaver of the Dark Ages astride one of his master's wagon-horses—for who else it can possibly be, no one can tell; and the only way to solve the mystery would be to have a chimney-sweeper in to sweep the gentleman, and then, perhaps somebody might find out.

Upon my word, I do really believe that if there was a pin to choose between Leicester-square and our back garden, certainly the Square had the best of it. For the fact of it was, that stupid, though respected mother of mine, would go making me believe, when first we came to our house, that the air up in our neighbourhood was pure enough to grow anything, and that, with the ground we had at the back of us, we might very easily get enough vegetables to keep the family all the year round, adding, then we should be sure to have them so sweet, and fresh, and good. Sweet, and fresh, and good, indeed!—upon my word!—the whole of our first year's crop consisted of only about four smutty, twopenny-halfpenny cabbages, that must have cost us a matter of ten shillings apiece, if they did a farthing—and they were all eaten away, and their leaves were as yellow and full of holes as the seat of a cane-bottomed chair; so that I began to find out, after we had been gardening away fit to kill ourselves, for I can't say how long, that really and truly we were doing nothing more than keeping a small preserve of slugs, snails, and caterpillars. Do what I would, and slave as I might, I could *not* keep the filthy things away. Cupful after cupful have I taken off the plants of a morning, and yet the next day there they were again, as thick as ever. I declare, the better part of my day used to be occupied, all through the summer, with looking after those plaguy greens, (which, water them as I would, I could not get to be anything equal in colour to the caterpillars that were always in them,) till, 'pon my word, my poor neck was as sunburnt as ginger.

As I couldn't manage any cabbages, I thought I 'd try and raise a small crop of peas; but, bless you! then I was nearly driven out of my mind by those impudent vagabonds of birds, the London sparrows—and catch *them* letting any peas come up (even if they would) within five miles of the General Post-Office. As

for frightening them away, I declare they were as bold as brass; for if they don't care for those mischievous monkeys of boys in the street, was it likely that they were to be intimidated by a respectable married woman like myself? Positively, I put up an old bonnet of mine on the end of a stick, which I should have thought would have scared even a philosopher off the premises—but, bless your heart! they only came and perched right on the crown of it, and chirped away as if they were comfortably at home in their nests in Red-Lion-square. And just when my lovely peas were beginning to break ground and poke their nice little green heads up out of the earth, I have often gone out into the garden and found a hundred of the young feathered ogres hard at my beautiful Prussian blues, picking away, and making noise enough for an infant school; and though I 'd go down to them, sh— sh— sh—, sh—ing away, and shaking my apron as hard as I could, I declare it wasn't until I got within arm's-length of them, that the brazen-faced little chits would condescend to take the least notice of me; and then they 'd only just hop up on the top of the wall, where they would stand, with their heads on one side, and looking out at the corners of their eyes at me, and chirping away just as if they were saying, "Peas, peas, peas"—drat 'em!

Though, to be sure, I had this consolation—I wasn't the only sufferer, for not one of the neighbours could do a bit better than I did—no, not even poor Mr. Simmons, and he tried hard enough, goodness gracious knows! I declare he used to be out in the broiling hot sun all day, digging away in his shirt-sleeves, until his poor bald head used to look like the top of a beef-steak pudding—and what for, I should like to know? just to raise, in the course of the year, as many radishes, and cauliflowers, and greens, and rhubarb, as he might buy any fine morning in Covent Garden market for a mere sixpence, or a shilling at most. Though he tried his hardest to force a cucumber or two, under a broken ground-glass lamp-shade, and spent a little fortune in manure, still the only one that came, of course, was nipped in the gherkin; and, notwithstanding some of his beds were covered with old tumblers, just for all the world like a sideboard, yet I 'm sure I never could see the good of them; for his crop of lettuces wouldn't have made more than one good-sized salad, after all; while the gooseberry and currant bushes that he went to the expense of having put all round his garden, never bore more than a pie and a small pudding in the best of seasons—and that not till the middle of November. In fact, I 've made up my opinion long ago, that gardening in the suburbs of London is a wicked and wilful waste of time and money. Really and truly the whole atmosphere of the place is so dreadfully smokey, that, without joking, one might just as well try to rear cauliflowers all round the top of a steamboat-funnel, as to think of getting one's vegetables out of a metropolitan hop-skip-and-a-jump kitchen garden. Vegetables for the family, indeed! "chickweed and groundsel for fine singing birds," more likely.

So, as I said before, I made up my mind, not to go making a stupid of myself any longer, playing at market-gardening, and turning myself into a manufacturing green-grocer and fruiterer, by trying to convert a trumpery band-box full of mould and gravel into a productive orchard. Accordingly I determined to root up the whole of those rat-tailed stalks of cabbages, and have the place nicely turfed in the centre, and a few pretty rose-bushes, and geranium trees, and other odd things, that at any rate would be pleasant to one's eye and nose, put round the sides. Consequently, I had up Mr. Dick Farden, and asked him whether he thought he could manage *that* for me without spoiling it; but really the fellow was so conceited, and fancied himself so clever, that, of course, he was as confident he could do it for me as he was that he could move my piano—(and a pretty mess he made of that—as the reader knows!) He couldn't, however, merely give a simple answer to a simple question, and have done with it; but must go on talking his head off, and speaking to me as familiarly as if I was one of his pot-companions, saying that it was very easy to lay the ground out, but he was afraid I should find it quite as hard to raise a nosegay as a salad "in the first city of the world." For, in all his experience, he had noticed that cockney roses were not to be forced beyond the size of grog-blossoms; and he would defy even Mr. Paxton himself to get London tulips any bigger than thimbles. He said that the beautiful climate of Brompton itself, which all the house-agents and physicians cried up as the Devonshire district of London, would only produce hollyhocks in the flower line, and mustard and cress in the vegetable ditto,—and from all he

had seen in his time, he had come to the conclusion, that trying to get roses and lilies, this side of Richmond, was really the pursuit of flowers under difficulties; for it appeared to be as if Providence had originally designed that the soil of London should bear nothing beyond bricks and mortar. Though it was not so much the fault of the ground as it was of the cats—and them he could not, for the life of him, help looking upon as the young gardener's worst companion—for as fast as you put in the seed, just as fast would they scratch it up again; and, of course, nothing would satisfy the creatures but they must go lying in your beds of a night. Indeed, the cats of London seemed, like young Love, always to prefer sleeping among the roses. Now, he remembered, he told me, about the time when Walworth went mad about dahlias, and offered a prize of a hundred guineas for the finest specimen that could be grown within two miles of the Elephant and Castle,—he was sure any one might have heard the amateur gardeners firing at the cats, and the guns going off there of a night, for all the world like a review in Hyde-park; but all to no good—for, after all, the prize was carried off by a clever young gentleman, who had no garden at all, and grew the choicest specimen there was at the show in an old black tea-pot, out of his two pair back.

However, I wasn't going to sit there all day hearing him try to persuade me against what I had set my heart and soul upon, and railing against everything just like an old East Indian with half a liver, for I could easily see that all my fine gentleman wanted was, to save himself the trouble of doing up the garden, and wished, of course, to take our money without doing a single thing for it; but I wasn't going to encourage him standing all day long with his hands in his pockets—not I indeed. So when he found that I wasn't quite such a stupid as he seemed to take me for, and was determined upon having the thing done, willy-nilly, then, of course, he must needs try his best to advise me to go to the expense of a lot of box-borders for the place. But I wouldn't listen to it for a minute, for, as I very plainly told him, I was sure that oyster-shells would be quite good enough for us, especially as dear Edward was so fond of having a dozen or two of Natives before he went to bed of a night, and I knew that I should get a very pretty border out of his suppers in less than a fortnight.

However, upon second thoughts, it struck me that, whilst I was about it, I might just as well have a few really good plants put in, particularly as Mr. Dick Farden said he knew a florist in the neighbourhood, who would do the whole thing for a mere nothing for me, and attend to it afterwards, either by the day, month, or year, on the most reasonable terms. So, as I couldn't see any great harm in hearing from Mr. Dick Farden's friend himself what he might consider "a mere nothing," I arranged in my own mind that the best way would be to let Farden call upon him, and send him round to me on his way down to deliver the letter I intended to write to the director (for there's nothing but directors now-a-days) of the Servants' Institution. Accordingly, having scribbled a note to the institution—saying that, as I was in want of a nurse, I should feel obliged if they would send one of their young men round to me *as soon as possible*, from whom I could learn the terms and advantages of the establishment—I told Mr. Dick Farden to take it to Oxford street, and, while he was out, to run round and tell his friend the florist to call on me *in the evening*, so that I might talk over with him about the flowers.

When that precious beauty of a Dick Farden came back, he told me he had brought with him the gentleman I had sent him for, who, he said, had written down a few of the names of such articles as he thought would suit me, and which he could recommend, as they had all been in the *nursery* a long time. Of course, I imagined the stupid fellow was alluding to the maid I wanted for my little Kitty, and not to a pack of bothering flowers, as I afterwards found out, to my great horror; and there was I going on for upwards of twenty minutes asking all kinds of odd questions of the stranger, fully believing that he was the person from the Servants' Institution, and not that trumpery friend of Mr. Dick Farden's, who was in the gardening line.

When the man came in, I said to him, very naturally, "My man-servant tells me that you have brought with you a few of the names of such as you think will suit me. They have all been in the nursery a long time, I believe; and what kind of places have they been accustomed to?"

"Oh, a very nice place," he replied; "about the same as yours might be,

mum. They had a warmish bed, and have always been accustomed to be out in the open air."

"Yes, I should want them to be out in the open air a great deal," I answered, though at the time I couldn't help fancying that it was very funny that the man should allude in particular to their *warm beds*. "Now I should like you to recommend me one," I continued, "that 's healthy and strong, and likely to remain with me for some time, for it is so distressing to have to provide yourself with a new one every year."

"So it is, mum," he returned. "I think I know the very one you want, mum. It 's a remarkable fine colour, mum."

"That certainly is a recommendation. I like them to look healthy," I replied, thinking, of course, that the man was only talking about a nursery maid, and not of some trumpery rose he had got at home.

"It 's a very dark coloured one, mum; indeed, very nearly a black," he answered; "and of a summer's evening smells wonderful, I can assure you, mum."

"Lord a mercy!" I cried out, believing the man wanted to recommend me a negress. "Oh la! all the blacks do, and I wouldn't have one of them about my house for all I 'm worth."

"Then may be, mum," he continued, "you 'd like one a trifle gayer. Now, there 's a Madame Pompadour we 've got that I think would just suit you. That 's a remarkable showy one, to be sure, and likes a good deal of raking."

"Oh, I see," I replied; "a French bit of goods. No, thank you; they are all of them a great deal too gay by half to please me."

"Well, mum, if that wont suit you," he replied, "what would you think of a nice Chinese? We 've got a perfect beauty, I can assure you—just the very thing for you, mum—climb up anywhere—run all along the area-railings, mum—crawl right over your back-garden door—then up the house into your drawing-room balcony—almost like a wild one, mum."

"Like a wild one!" I almost shrieked, horror-struck at the idea of intrusting my sweet, little, helpless angel of a Kate to the care of a creature with any such extraordinary propensities. "Too like a wild one for me. I don't want any such things about my house."

"But if you object to their running about so much, mum," he went on, "it 's very easy to tie them up and give them a good trimming occasionally, and then you can keep them under as much as you please."

"I don't want one," I replied, "that will require so much looking after, but one that you know could be trusted anywhere—especially as there will be a little baby to be taken care of."

"A little baby! Oh! then, if that 's the case, mum," he had the impudence to say, "I should think you had better have a monthly one while you are about it."

"A monthly one!" I exclaimed, thinking he was referring to a second Mrs. Toosypegs, instead of a rose; "what can you be thinking of? I tell you I don't want anything of the kind."

"Yes, but I 'm sure you don't know how hardy they are, mum," he added, quite coolly. "I can give you my word, we 've got one that 's out now, mum, that went through all the severe frosts of last winter with nothing more than a bit of matting as a covering at night-time. Though, for the matter of that, almost all our monthlies are the same, and don't seem to care where they are put, for really and truly I do think that they would go on just as well, mum, even if their beds were chock full of gravel."

"I tell you I don't want anything of the kind," I said, half offended at what (thanks to that blundering Mr. Dick Farden) I thought very like the man's impudence.

"I hope no offence, mum," he replied; "but you see I must run over what we 've got. Now, there 's polianthuses. I 'm sure you couldn't have anything much nicer or quieter than that, mum."

"Polly who?" I inquired.

"Anthus, mum," he replied.

"Well, what 's that one like?" I asked.

"Oh! the sort is common enough, mum," he continued—"not very tall, and rather delicate, and will generally have five or six flowers in a cluster at the head—wants a glass, though, if the weather sets in very cold, mum—and— "

"There, that's enough," I interrupted; "I'm sick and tired of those common kind of things—they wouldn't have a glass here, I can tell them."

"Maybe, then, mum," he went on, "as it don't seem as we can suit you with any of those I've mentioned, perhaps you don't want such a thing as an old man."

"Old man!" I cried. "No, what on earth should I ever do with any old man here, I should like to know?" of course, little dreaming that he was alluding all the while to the plant of that name.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, mum," he replied, "but I thought yours was just the place for a very fine, and remarkably handsome one that we've got; and it struck me that you might have a spare bed that you would like to fill, especially as it would be little or no extra expense for you."

"No, no, no!" I answered, "I tell you once for all, I've no room for any old man here; and, besides, if I had, a nice thing it would be to have him dying directly the cold weather set in."

"Oh, bless you, mum," he replied, "a good healthy old man will never die, and look quite lively all the winter through. However, mum, perhaps you'd be kind enough to step round some day to our place, and then we could show you what we've got, and you could choose for yourself, mum."

"Yes," I answered; "perhaps that would be best, and then I can please myself."

When the man had gone, I said to myself: "Well, my fine gentleman, I shall never trouble you again;" for I declare, that of all the servants I ever heard of, his seemed to be the worst; for, of course, how was I ever to be able to tell that he was only talking of a set of trumpery plants that he had got for sale. I'm sure, if he had two grains of common sense, he ought to have seen that there was some mistake somewhere; though, for the matter of that, I don't suppose I should ever have found it out myself, had it not been for the gentleman from the Servants' Institution calling to see me, scarcely half-an-hour afterwards. And then, bless us and save us, if I didn't go taking him for the nurseryman, though I certainly must do myself the justice to say that I couldn't help thinking that he looked rather grand for a gardener, with his white cravat, and black coat buttoned up to his chin, and black kid gloves, with the fingers all out, and looking as crumpled and shrivelled as French plums.

No sooner had Mr. Dick Farden told me that the other gentleman that I had sent him for had come, than I had him into the parlour, and told him that if he would step with me into the garden, I would arrange with him what I wanted done to it, and he could let me have his opinion about it. The man opened his eyes, and looked at me as wise as an owl; as, indeed, he might; for what on earth could what my garden wanted doing to it, be to him? When we got there, I declare he must have thought me mad, for I took him right up to the middle of it, and told him I had made up my mind to have a nice grass-plot laid down in the centre, so that my dear little pet might play about on it, without coming to any harm. But he only stared the more, and said, "Very good;" though, of course, if he had spoken his real opinion, he would have said, "Very strange." Then I told him I had settled upon having some nice flower-beds all round the sides, and said I thought it would look very pretty; on which he looked at me for a short time, with his mouth wide open, as much as to say, "Surely the woman must be out of her mind;" but he only answered, "Indeed." After that, I asked him what plants he would advise me to have, and whether he thought the soil would be rich enough for dahlias? But, without looking at the ground, and keeping his eye fixed intently on me, he answered, "Certainly;" and then clutching the handle of his umbrella as tight as he could, he retreated several paces off, in a way that I couldn't for the life of me understand at the time, but which, now that I come to think of it, clearly convinces me that the poor man must have fancied that I had broken loose from Bedlam, and that he expected every minute I should seize hold of the spade, which was within arm's length of me, and race round the garden after him with it. When I told him that most likely he was not aware of how hard the ground was, and I stamped on it two or three times, and raised myself up on my toes, just to show him that I couldn't make any impression upon it, the stupid ninny began jumping about and dancing away, and staring at me, till, I declare, his eyes looked for all the world like two farthings. Coupling this with the whole of the man's previous strange behaviour, upon my word, I thought *he* had gone stark raving mad; though it's quite plain to me *now* that he thought

the same of *me*, and was only playing those antics just to humour me. I seized the spade and he opened his umbrella, and there we stood, face to face, thrusting away at one another as hard as ever we could, and all the time jumping and skipping about, like two *dancing* bears. I gave a loud scream, and he, poor man, retreated as quick as he could do so backwards to the door, where he met with that scoundrel of a Dick Farden, who had been the cause of it all, and whom I no sooner saw than I told him, for Heaven's sake, to seize that mad friend of his. Then, lawk a daisy! out it all came; and I learnt, to my great horror, that I had been confounding the two men. Of course I apologized to the gentleman from the Servants' Institution as a lady ought to, telling him that I was extremely sorry that I had mistaken him for a gardener and a madman; but the man went as red in the face as a tomata, with passion, declaring that he had never been so insulted before in all his life, and vowing that he would make me pay for having dragged him all that way, through a broiling sun, upon a fool's errand; and then out of the house he bounced, like a human cracker.

When the man had left, I declare I was so vexed at having been made such a stupid of, by that shameful vagabond of a Mr. Dick Farden—for, of course, if it hadn't been for him, the mistake would never have occurred, and I shouldn't wonder at all if he hadn't brought it about intentionally, just so as to have a good laugh at me, out of sheer spite at my stopping his wages—I was so vexed with the fellow, I repeat, that I had him up then and there, and told him that he had better not let me see his face within my doors again, or, as sure as his name was Mr. Dick Farden, I would give him in custody. Then it was that I found out what kind of a person I had been harbouring in my house, for although, up to that time, he had been so civil-spoken and respectful, that one would have fancied that butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth, then, of course, because it no longer answered his purpose to behave himself, he turned round and abused me like a pickpocket, until I declare I was so mad that, if I hadn't been a perfect lady, I should have dusted his jacket and combed his hair nicely for him, that I should — a saucy, good-for-nothing, double-faced, clumsy, cowardly monster! Augh! if I detest one thing more than another, it's people that can't keep a civil tongue in their heads.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH I JUST LET THE READER KNOW MY OPINION OF THAT HALF-WITTED IDIOT OF AN EMMA OF MINE.—MAIDS OF ALL WORK CERTAINLY ARE NO GREAT GENIUSES AT THE BEST OF TIMES, BUT I DECLARE I DO THINK THAT GIRL HAD NO MORE BRAINS IN HER HEAD THAN WOULD HAVE FILLED AN EGG-CUP, FOR I'VE TRIED A GOOD MANY SERVANTS IN MY DAY, BUT REALLY AND TRULY SHE WAS THE VERIEST BOOBY THAT EVER WENT OUT TO SERVICE, THOUGH PERHAPS I OUGHT TO ADD, IN JUSTICE TO THE GIRL, THAT, FOR A WONDER, I HAD LITTLE OR NO FAULT TO FIND WITH HER IN OTHER RESPECTS.

"I 've talked and I 've prattled with some fifty maids,
And *changed* them as oft, do you see;
But of all the bright beauties, I ever knew,
Miss Emma's the maid for me."

POPULAR SONG, *with a few slight alterations by myself, and which I was forced to make, for positively all the Maids spoken of in Ballads seem to have been such pinks-of-perfections, and to have come from Llangollen, and Athens, and Judah, and a pack of other such outlandish places, that it is very difficult to find any that will suit me.*

I SHOULDN'T wonder but there are some bilious, discontented people, who will perhaps say that I have been devoting more time and space to Mr. Dick Farden than I ought to have done. But it 's the old fable over again; there was no pleasing everybody, whichever way the man treated the donkey, so of course it 's not to be expected that everybody will be pleased with the account of the way in which Mr. Dick Farden treated me. However, I was determined to do the man justice while I was about him; and now that I've come back to Miss Emma, I intend to do the same to her. Perhaps this may meet their eyes some day, and then I dare say it will be a nice blow to them. For, of course, *they* never thought *they* were in the wrong, not they, and will be rather surprised to find out what *I* thought about it.

But before beginning my account of that wretched half-witted girl, I should like the reader to understand that it is far from my nature to blame any menial for want of those intellects which are not in our power to command. Of course, poor servants can't be expected to have had the inestimable blessings of a finished education, like ourselves, and, therefore, a deficiency of understanding in them should be rather pitied than blamed. Though with respect to my Emma, her abominable stupidity was *so* hard to bear with, that at times, upon my word, it was as much as ever I could do to keep myself from flying out at her, and giving it her soundly. Often and often have I been forced to have a hard battle with myself, to prevent myself from shaking her well, and trying to knock something like sense into the stupid's brain. It 's all very well for a pack of self-conceited men to say "that a good woman has no head." I 'm sure for the matter of that, my Emma had none at all, and she was bad enough, heaven knows! But what, in my opinion, deprived the pitiable object of all sympathy was, that she wasn't wholly uneducated, and had been taught to read and write, but la! the benefits of reading and writing were entirely thrown away upon *her;* and I verily believe that even if her education had extended to the blessings of the use of the globes, she would have been as little like a rational creature, after all. It 's all very well to talk about manuring the soil, but what are you to do, I should like to know, when there 's no soil to manure? As Edward very truly said, as for furnishing *her* upper story, you might have put in the table of weights and measures and a complete bookcase beside, and even then her head would have been as empty as ever, for it would all have gone in at one ear and come out at the other; and, as he very wittily added, the girl's knowledge-box was lined with less reading than a hair trunk.

The stupid things the girl would say and do, and the dreadful scrapes she would get me into, all through her horrible simplicity, were enough to make the blood of a gold fish boil. Positively, one was always obliged to be speaking by the card, as Hamlet says in the play, though what speaking by the card means I really can't say, for I never knew anybody but the sapient pig Toby, who was accustomed to do so. If you wanted anything done, you had to tell it to her in a hundred different ways, or else she would be sure to make some dreadful blunder or other; for, as for the flowers of speech, bless you! she paid no more regard to flowers than a cat does! If a double knock came to the door early in the day, and I had my hair in papers, or was down in the kitchen, seeing about dear Edward's dinner, or was in the bed-room, making up the dirty linen for the wash, or in the drawing-room, dusting the china, (and consequently not dressed to receive company) and I told her, "I wouldn't see them, and that I was out," down stairs she 'd frisk, and say to whomever it might be, "Missus says she wont see you, and she 's out." Now I put it to every respectable married woman (who of course has, over and over again, been obliged to tell hundreds of white fibs like this in her time,) whether it wasn't enough to ruffle a quaker, to have your best friends —carriage-folks, may be—insulted and turned away from your door in such a dreadful way?

Again, I recollect just as the evenings were getting chilly, I thought Edward would relish a round or two of nice hot toast—not cut too thick, and well buttered —indeed, I thought I could take a mouthful of it myself—and accordingly, having told Miss Emma to make some, she must needs, when she brought it up, go setting it down on the slop basin. So I said to her, "Bless me, Emma, what is that footman down stairs for, I should like to know?"

"There 's no footman down stairs, I can assure you, mum," answered the stupid thing, staring her eyes half out of her head with wonder.

"I tell you there is," I exclaimed, "under the dresser. At least, all I can say is, there *was* this morning—though you know as well as I do, that it 's no business to be lying there, all among the pots and pans—especially when I had a hook put up over the fire-place on purpose to have the footman hung upon. Why don't you go and bring the thing up directly?" I continued, as she stood lost in astonishment. "Perhaps you will tell me next that it 's walked out of the house!"

"There 's been no footman in the house, mum, ever since I 've been here," she answered, sobbing, and wiping her eyes with her apron. "The only one I 've seen, I 'm sure, is Mr. Simmons' John, and he was sowing potatoes in the garden next door.

"Bless the child!" I cried out, "was there ever such a stupid!" and actually I had to take her down stairs and teach her that a footman was a thing made of brass, with legs that would go inside any fender, and used in the best of families to stand a hot toast before the fire of a winter's evening—and *that* I supposed was the reason why they gave the thing such a name.

I declare it really wasn't prudent to trust that Emma to do a thing, and even that little lamb of a Kitty of mine was scarcely safe with a stupid, like her, in the house. For I recollect once, I had been thinking the simpleton had a great deal of spare time on her hands, and might just as well do a little needlework, as sit twiddling her finger and thumb of an evening, so I told her that my little poppet of a Kitty was growing so fast that all her things were getting too short for her, and she really wanted a tuck out in her best frock, and would certainly look all the better for it, so I would thank her to attend to it that night, and let it be done before she went to bed. In the evening, I was in the parlour, boiling down some quince pips to make a nice fixature for my hair, and all the while I could hear that sweet little cherub of mine down stairs crying; so I said to myself, what the dickens can that idiot be doing with the child in the kitchen at this time of night, when it ought to have been undressed and in bed a good hour ago? Off I trotted to see what precious bit of stupidity my lady was at now. When I reached the kitchen, I thought I should have fainted, for there sat that Emma, with my little angel on her knee, dressed out in its best frock, and with its dear little innocent face daubed all over with treacle, just as if it had been tarred. "What on earth have you been doing with the child, Emma?" I exclaimed.

"I thought as you said it was to have a tuck out in its best frock, ma'am," she replied, "it could have nothing nicer than plenty of bread and treacle." And then to my horror I learnt from her, that when I told her I fancied the child would look all the better for having a *tuck out* in its best frock, bless and save us, if the stupid thing didn't imagine that I wished it to have a *grand feast* in its Sunday clothes! "Oh, you stupid, stupid thing!" I said, "and what business have you to go giving the darling all that mess, when the doctor has ordered me to let it have nothing but slops?"

"Nothing but slops, mum!" she exclaimed, with her mouth wide open with astonishment.

"Yes, you stupid, nothing but slops," I answered; "don't you even know what slops are now?"

"In course I do, mum,—augh!—oh, la!" she replied; and from the way in which she turned up her nose, and the wry face she made, I could easily see that she fancied that the dear babe was to be fed with the grouts of the tea-cups, or whatever else might be in the slop-basin, when the breakfast things came down.

Positively, nothing was to be done with the woman, I was convinced. She was naturally so thick-headed, that there was no making the least impression upon her; and really I do think one might just as well have tried to drill wisdom into a barber's block, as to have made her understand even the most every-day things imaginable. If a body, without thinking of it, used a word or a phrase with two meanings to it, and one was the right and the other the wrong, of course the bright genius would go and puzzle her brains till she found out the wrong one. And the worst of it was, she never would come and ask, or one wouldn't have minded, so that I do think, as long as she was in the house, not one day went over our heads without some dreadful blunder or other being committed by the ninny. Now, for instance, Mr. Edward had been saying, in his mean way, as he never had a pudding or a pie for dinner, he supposed ribbon had got so dear the housekeeper couldn't afford pastry; so I thought I would put a stop to his shabby satire, and let him have a nice "dog in a blanket," as a treat for dinner one day—especially as he's very partial to it; and, certainly, if it's made with a nice thin crust, and plenty of good strawberry—or even I don't mind if it's raspberry—jam, I do think it is as nice a dish as can well be put upon table—only the worst of it is, one's apt to eat too much of it; and, I don't know whether my fair readers find it so with them or not, but to me it's rather indigestible, or, I must say, I should let dear Edward have it oftener.

Accordingly, as, of course, I fancied *that* silly Emma of mine, blockhead as she is, couldn't well go making any mistake with so simple a dish as a "roley-poley pudding," and I didn't feel much in the humour to go messing with flour in that

not kitchen, I had the girl up, and to guard against mistake, I asked her whether she knew what a dog in a blanket was? Of course the wiseacre did; anybody, she fancied, would know what a dog in a blanket was.

"Well, then," said I, "do you think you could manage one for me?"

"Oh! yes, certainly, mum," answered Miss Clever; "I used to have to do one every night at my last missus's."

"Very well, then," I replied, though I really can't tell how I ever could have been so stupid as to have fancied that any woman—however partial she might be to roley-poleys—could have managed to eat one of the heavy things every night of her life before going to bed—"here 's some strawberry jam for you; and for heaven's sake don't spare it, but take care and spread it at least an inch thick upon your crust, or else it 's not worth eating!"

"Oh, thank you, mum!" she returned, as she took it, and trotted out of the room with what I thought at the time a highly satisfied air (as well indeed she might). In about half-an-hour, my lady marched into the parlour as coolly as possible, and, saying she had done the dog in a blanket as I had desired, asked if she should bring it up stairs to me.

"No," I replied, quite innocently, "I don't want to see it; you can put it on the fire now, and let it boil slowly for about an hour to an hour and a quarter, for I wouldn't thank you for it unless it 's well done."

Open went her mouth again, and out came her eyes, while she stammered—"Boil it! why, you don't mean to say you 're going to eat it, mum?"

"Eat it! of course I am—for dinner," I replied. "Why, what on earth have you been doing with it? You have rolled it up, I suppose?"

"Oh! yes, mum," she answered, "as nice and snug as ever you seed anything in all your life."

"And you haven't spared the jam—have you, simpleton?" I added.

"Oh! no, mum," she returned; "I emptied the whole pot."

"You 're sure you spread it on your crust an inch thick, now, as I told you?" I inquired; for I began to have my misgivings, from the girl's manner, that something or other was wrong.

"Certainly, mum," she replied, "on the crust and on the crumb, too; and, with many thanks to you, mum, I eat as many as four slices."

"*You* eat *my* jam!" I screamed; "oh dear! you shameful wicked girl! but what on earth has become of my beautiful dog in a blanket?"

"He 's all safe, mum," she answered, alarmed at my manner; "he 's down stairs—I put him in the baby's cradle."

"In my sweet angel's cradle!" I shrieked; and, saying no more, I rushed down stairs, when, sure enough, there I found that hairy brute of a Carlo of ours rolled up in one of the Whitneys belonging to my baby's bassinet, and kicking away as if it were half-stifled. "Oh, you good-for-nothing bit of goods!" I exclaimed—"how dare you, Emma, ever tell me such an abominable falsehood as that you used to do a dog in a blanket every night at your last mistress's!—oh! you wicked story, you!"

"I 'm nothing of the kind, mum, and it 's the plain truth!" she answered, sobbing; "and you can go and ask Miss Mackay yourself, if I hadn't to do her Italian greyhound up in flannel every evening before I went to bed."

I declare even I—vexed as I was—could hardly give it the girl as *she* deserved, and *I* felt inclined to do. But, really, her utter want of even common comprehension did seem to me so pitiable, that I couldn't bring myself to do more than tell her that I should have that pot of jam out of her next quarter, as sure as she was born—though as, luckily for her, she hadn't wasted any flour, I should look over her shameful, idiotic conduct, once more—giving her this warning, that if she didn't contrive to cram some more brains into her head for the future, she must look out for another situation.

I 'm certain my fair readers will allow that some little credit was due to me for the command I had over my temper throughout this trying occasion—especially when I tell them that, do what I would, I never could keep the fleas out of that Carlo's beautiful coat, so that no wonder my little cherub of a Kitty was so restless the night after that dog had been rolled up in one of her blankets. When I went to dress her in the morning, I declare if the beautiful white skin of the angel wasn't covered all over with large red spots, for all the world like the six-

penny wooden horse I had bought her for a toy. Nor did the annoyance stop here, for, being accustomed to take the little thing into our bed of a morning, to play with her—goodness gracious me! if Edward and myself were not quite as much tormented with the lively irritating things, as even little Kitty had been, so that really and truly we couldn't for the life of us get what I call a nice comfortable night's rest for weeks afterwards.

Even if I had felt inclined to bear with the miserable girl's wretched stupidity, still her abominable love of gossiping was quite enough to make any respectable, quiet, well-disposed lady, like myself, take her by the ears and bundle her into the streets. Though, of course, her chattering gossip wasn't to be wondered at, for we all know that empty barrels make the greatest noise, and her head was so empty, that I declare she would make noise enough for fifty women, and talk fourteen to the dozen any day: for, without exaggeration, her tongue was so long that it was impossible for her to keep it between her teeth. If the butcher-boy came with the joint, there she would stand gossiping at the area-gate, wasting her own time and the boy's too. When the baker brought the bread, it was just the same; or even if it was that little chit from the green-grocer, it made no difference to her. Though what the dickens an empty-headed thing, like she was, could have to say to them all, I never could make out. While as for the servants in the neighbourhood, I declare she was bosom friends with the whole street. If I didn't keep my eye upon her every moment of the day, off she'd be, out in the garden, chattering away over the wall, either with the housemaid at the Tomlins's, on the right, or with the cook at the Allens', on the left, or with that impudent monkey of a footman at the Simmons's, at the back. And as for a morning, when she was pretending to be cleaning down that door-step, I do think, if I had to ring once, I had to ring a dozen times for Edward's hot water to shave with. Of course, she couldn't hear the bell — how could she? — when she was gossiping away with the next doors, putting a lot of tales about the neighbourhood, all against me, as I felt convinced she was? For positively the maids on both sides of us knew just as much about my affairs as I did myself; and I'm sure, that even if she had lived at the Tomlins's or the Allens', she couldn't have known more of their secrets: for often and often she has stood for better than half an hour telling me a pack of things about them, that, of course, they wouldn't have liked anybody to know. I used to think it was very strange, and couldn't for the life of me make out how it was things that I fancied nobody in the world but Edward and myself were acquainted with, could come round to me in the way they did. Until one fine morning, a little bird whispered in my ear, that it was that beauty of an Emma of mine, who, instead of sweeping round the area-railings, was pulling my character to pieces, and vilifying me to the first of the neighbours' maids that she could lay hold of, saying Mrs. Sk—n—st—n did this, Mrs. Sk—n—st—n did that, or Mrs. Sk—n—st—n did the other,—(of course, there's no necessity for me to go repeating what the good-for-nothing minx actually *did* say of me,) — so that, at last, it really came to this,—if even Edward and I had a word or two together about any little trifling matter, off the *good* news went,—"There's been another row at the Sk—n—st—ns'," right up to the York and Albany; and "There's been another row at the Sk—n—st—ns'," right down to Cumberland Market.

I only wanted to catch the beauty in the fact: for I don't like listening to what other people say, and so determined to wait quietly until I could overhear her telling her fine stories myself. As I expected, it wasn't long before I pounced upon her very nicely, and then it was, oh dear me, who would have thought it! For the very morning after that affair of the "dog in a blanket," I thought my lady was a long time hearth-stoning the step, and I just put my head very quietly out of the window, and there sure enough she was, with those two idle maids, from both the next doors, all three of them in their night-caps, with their hair like door-mats, and their gowns all open behind, and their brooms in their hands, sweeping away, as a make-believe, just for a minute, and then laying their heads together, and standing gossiping for at least five — then off again for a bit more sweeping — and then back again for a bit more scandal. This was just what I wanted, so rubbing my hands with glee, I popped on my flannel dressing-gown, and stole down stairs, as silently as a black-beetle. When I came to the pas-

sage, I slipped behind the door, and heard them going on so nicely, no one can tell!

"Did you hever hear of sitch wulgarity, Miss Ginger? honly to think of her calling on a common jam pudden, a dog in a blanket!" said that minx of an Emma of mine.

"Well, I never heerd tell on the likes of sitch low talk—did you hever, Miss Twigg?" exclaimed that maid at the Tomlins's.

"Not, I, my dear; but then to be sure *I've* only lived in the fust of families," answered that slip-shod, draggle-tail of a Miss Twigg at the Allens'. "But, after all, it 's no more than I should have looked for from sitch a stuck-up thing as she is, for missus says as how her friends his honly coal-eavers."

As the reader can well conceive, I felt the tips of my fingers itching to be among the impudent, story-telling jades, but, thank goodness! I restrained my feelings—merely saying to myself, "Coal-heavers, indeed! well, if three barges and one wagon make a coal-heaver, I should like to know what makes a merchant, and *that 's* what *my* friends are, as that Mrs. Allen very well knows."

"What do you think?" continued Miss Emma—"why Mrs. Sk—n—st—n hactually had the himperance to tell me that she 'd stop the pot of jam she guv me, as plain as she could speak, hout of my wages. But I aint a goin to let her—no, not if I summonses the stingy old cat for it."

"You a'nt—an't you?" I cried, bursting out from my hiding-place; for, upon my word, my blood was up so, that I seized hold of her by the shoulders, and gave her such a shaking as she won't forget in a hurry, while her two friends scampered off with their brooms immediately they caught sight of me. "So you 'll summons *me*, will you?" I continued, when I couldn't shake her any longer—"you 'll summons *me*, will you? and so you may, this day month, if you please—and you may summons me, if you like, for not giving you a character, into the bargain, for you won't get one from *me*—you ungrateful, wicked, stupid, double-faced idiot, you!"

The courteous reader will, no doubt, be surprised that I didn't pack the hussey out of the house then and there, and will, I dare say, be blaming me for allowing such a creature to remain one moment longer in my establishment. But I know I have always been too considerate to servants, and of course that is the reason why they treat me as they do. Besides, dear Edward was unfortunately from home, (having been called away to the Guildford Assizes by professional business,) and he does side with the servants so, that I thought it might prevent his making a noise, if I gave her the usual month's warning, instead of bundling her and her trumpery box into the streets, as she deserved.

But, of course, it was only the old story over again, the more indulgent I was to her, the more I suffered for it. For I declare it was not more than two days after this that her abominable stupidity again got me into such a dreadful scrape, that I can only say that it was extremely lucky for her that I didn't find it out till I got in the country, or there 's no telling what I might have done to her.

Mr. Sk—n—st—n had written me a letter to say that he feared that business would detain him in Guildford for at least a fortnight longer, as his cause stood last but three in the list, and the special jury cases had not yet been disposed of. So as I couldn't, for the life of me, see the fun of being boxed up in town all alone, while my dear husband was enjoying himself in the country, and paying goodness knows what in hotel bills, when I was sure that one-half of the money would keep us very comfortably in lodgings in a country town like that Guildford, so I say I made up my mind, as the fine weather seemed likely to last, to pack up my box, and run down to him on the morrow, especially as I knew it would be such an agreeable surprise to him, and he was entitled by law to a guinea a-day for his expenses, and which I was convinced would be more than sufficient for the two of us.

Accordingly, immediately after breakfast, the next morning, I told that Miss Emma to bring down my hair-trunk, out of the back attic, and I set to work packing it, so that I might be in time to catch the three o'clock train. As it was only for a week or so, I thought one morning and one afternoon dress would be quite sufficient. Still, as there was a chance of my having to see company, (for every one knows how gay a country town is during the assizes, and this year there was to be a grand trial for a dreadfully shocking murder, which I was sure

would fill Guildford with all the best people for miles round), I thought it better, as I felt convinced that, under the circumstances, I should meet with several of the first ladies in the neighbourhood, to put up my beautiful new Barège, which I had just had home from the dressmaker's, and only worn the Sunday before at church, where it was generally admired.

Really, when I came to turn it over in my mind, it was such heavenly weather that, upon my word, it seemed to me like a sin to go shutting oneself up in those close first and second class carriages, with a set of old molly-coddles, that will have all the windows up, when for half or even a quarter of the money that one is obliged to pay for being stifled alive, one can have all the advantage of travelling in an open carriage, and breathing that beautiful, pure, and balmy country air, which, to a person living in such a smoky place as London, is positively beyond all price. Not that I should wish any one to suppose that it was the paltry difference between the fares that influenced my opinion, for I declare I would sooner any day pay the price of the first class carriages to be allowed to ride in the third. Besides, it wasn't as if I was likely to meet with any one that I was acquainted with, though for the matter of that, it was little or nothing to me if I did. So (I make no secret about it, for I don't care who knows it) I made up my mind to go in the third class, especially as I should have to pay that minx of a Miss Emma her board wages for the fortnight; so that what with cab hire, and those shameful impositions of turnpikes, I was fearful lest the money that Edward had left with me for the housekeeping might run short, and I should be driven up in a corner for want of funds. Consequently, I put on an old dress that I didn't care about spoiling, for I wasn't going to be stupid enough to run the chance of having an expensive gown entirely ruined by those black smuts from the engine, or to go decking oneself out so as to attract notice where you rather wished to avoid it.

When I had finished packing, I sat down, for the first time that day, just to try and coax myself to eat a mouthful of the beautiful little leg of mutton that I had had for dinner the day before, and which had looked such a picture in the butcher's shop, that I took quite a fancy to it, as I was sure that it would eat as nice and tender as lamb, and so it did. While I was thus occupied, I gave that simpleton of a Miss Emma a card, on which I had written, in a large round hand, "Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, passenger, Guildford," so that there might be no mistake about my luggage, and told her (as I do like to have my meals in quiet) to fasten it on my box with a tack or two, and then to run round and fetch me a cab as quick as she could; for, on looking at the clock, I found I had no time to spare, and I wanted to cut up the remainder of the mutton into a sandwich or two, as I didn't see the good of leaving it for that good-for-nothing servant of mine, when I was going to put her upon board wages; and, as I said to myself, who knows but I might be thankful for something to eat on the journey; and even if I shouldn't be, why it would save me the expense of having any cold meat with my tea.

When the cab came round, and I went to see my trunk safe on the box with the driver, lo and behold! if that blockhead of an Emma hadn't been sewing the card on to the handle with some cotton, instead of nailing it on to the lid, as I desired her. But of course she would have it that it was all my fault, saying, that when I told her to fasten it on with a tack or two, she naturally fancied that I meant with a needle and thread—instead of a hammer and nails, as any one, with half a grain of sense in their heads, would have understood me. But there was no time to have it altered then, so I jumped into the cab, disgusted with the whole world, and determined to prevent accidents, by not allowing the trunk to go out of my sight for a moment.

What with quarrelling with that Emma, and searching for coppers to give those dreadful cheats at the turnpikes, and the cabman going the longest way round to make me fancy the distance was greater than it was, positively, when I got to the railway, the bell was ringing. While I was quarrelling with that shameful impostor of a cabman about the fare, I turned round, and saw a porter running off with my trunk on his green velveteen shoulder. I screamed after him, telling him to put it down that instant, but it was all to no use. So, taking the cabman's number, and paying what he asked, off I rushed into the office, and whilst I was getting my ticket, told the gentleman that one of their porters had, in a most shameful manner, carried off my trunk, and I should certainly hold the company

responsible for any damage or loss that might happen to it. But of course he would have it that I needn't alarm myself, and would find it all right, saying that if there was a card on it marked "Guildford," it would be put with the Guildford luggage, and taken out at the proper station. But there was no time for looking into the matter, for when I got on the platform, the second bell rang, and I was no sooner in my place, than off went the train.

I don't know whether it has ever struck the reader, but it seems to me that it never rains but when you 're going out upon pleasure. No matter if it has been fine for a month previously, only just put on your things for a trip into the country, or down the river, or for a fête at Vauxhall, or even go out in a new bonnet and leave your umbrella at home, and of course down it *must* pour in torrents, just because you don't want it, and, positively, as if the clerk of the weather had got a spite against you. When my peas were coming up, of course there wasn't a drop of rain for six weeks; and now that I had set my heart upon a beautiful excursion, a few miles out of town, it must begin to spit the very moment the train left Nine Elms, and come down in perfect cataracts by the time we got to Wandsworth. Talk about subscriptions for the damage done to market-gardeners and florists by a heavy shower; I 'm sure I never see it begin to rain, but what my bosom bleeds to think of the dreadful destruction that must then be going on among the artificial flowers in the ladies' bonnets; and, goodness gracious! if mine didn't hang down and look as pappy as if they had been boiled. To be sure, there was a young man next to me who was also going to Guildford, and who, being a perfect gentleman, was kind enough to offer me a part of his umbrella, for he couldn't help seeing that my parasol was of no more use to me than an extinguisher; and I declare, even then—for what is one umbrella between two, especially when it 's only a small German, as his was—even then, I say, the rain kept dripping down my neck and all over my shoulders, until my black silk Polka was so wet that it looked as shiny as a policeman's oil-skin cape; and I was so drenched to the skin, that, upon my word, I was quite glad to get out of the bothering train, and take shelter even in the little, poking, lonely railway hotel, where at least, I said to myself, I shall be able to change my soaking things, and get dry and comfortable before going on to Guildford.

When I got into the station, I told a porter to look after my luggage, adding that it was merely one box, with "Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, passenger, Guildford," written on a card, attached to the handle; and presently back he came, saying that the only box in the office was a hair trunk, without any name at all on it.

"Is it a brown hair trunk?" I asked, quite alarmed.

"Yes, mum," he answered, "a brown hair trunk, with brass nails."

On going and looking at it, I said, "Yes, that 's mine; and the card has got torn off, just as I expected."

Directly I got to the hotel, I requested the landlady to let me have a room with a good fire in it, and a cup of hot tea, as soon as ever she could, as I was wet through, and afraid of catching my death, unless I had something warm, and put on some nice dry things immediately. Once in my room, with my bonnet off, I couldn't help saying to myself, "Drat those third-class carriages! I declare if I 'm not as wet as a bathing-woman!" And so I was; for my hair hung down the sides of my face positively like skeins of silk. As for my poor, beautiful Leghorn bonnet, it had no more shape in it than a basket-woman's in Covent-Garden Market; and whenever I went across the room, I declare the wet came dripping from me, for all the world as if I was a walking umbrella.

However, I soon had my box up stairs, and set to work about getting my things out. But when I put the key in the lock, do what I would, I couldn't make it turn. Of course, I thought some of the crumbs of the mutton sandwiches I had in my pocket must have got into it; so I kept blowing down it, and knocking it on my hand, but all to no good, till, at last, I got into such a passion with it, that I put the end of my parasol into the handle of the key, and at last forced it round.

Oh dear, oh dear! I thought I should have fainted when I lifted up the lid. Goodness gracious me! if I hadn't got some brute of a man's box, instead of my own. I flew to the bell and nearly pulled it down. When the landlady came up, I shrieked out, "They 've given me the wrong box. You must send down to the station directly and see if mine is there; for I know I shall be laid up for months with a cold, if I don't have it."

"Mercy me, mum, you don't say so!" replied *that* landlady; "and I shouldn't wonder if yours has gone on to Southampton now; however, the porter will be here when the next train comes in, and then I can ask him all about it, for really there isn't a single soul in the house that I can spare at present."

"Why, my good woman," I exclaimed, "I'm drenched to the skin; and what am I to do in the mean time?"

"You shall have your tea directly, mum, and the next train won't be above an hour at the most. Would you like a nice hot chop with it, mum?"

"Chop! No!" I screamed, "I don't want any chops; I want my box."

"Very well, mum, you shall have it as soon as possible—with a nice mixed pickle, mum;" and then, hearing one of the bells ring, out she flew, leaving me to steam away before the fire, just as if I was a potato.

There I sat, "dratting" the stupidity of that Emma, until positively I felt the shivers coming on, and was convinced that if I didn't do something, I should be having a doctor's bill as long as my arm to pay, and be, perhaps, a martyr to the rheumatism for the rest of my days. All of a sudden, just as I was driven to desperation, it struck me that perhaps the plaguy box belonged to a married couple, and there might be a gown or a wrapper in it that one could put on; and as I dare say whoever had got my trunk wouldn't be very particular with it, I didn't see why I should go sparing theirs. Accordingly, I began unpacking it. The first thing I took out was a great big ugly pilot coat, smelling away of tobacco smoke enough to knock one down,—then, three or four coloured shirts, some with blue stripes like a bed-tick, and others with large red spots, as if they had been made out of a clown's dress;—then there was a box of shaving-soap—and a bottle of whisker-dye—and a fishing-rod—and a couple of pairs of trowsers, with patterns big enough for druggets—and a bothering German flute—a bright blue surtout—a magic razor-strop—a pot of Yarmouth bloaters—a volume of Blair's Sermons—and some socks—oh, la! as full of large round holes as the front of a peep-show. I really didn't know what to do. It was impossible for me to sit trembling away there like a jelly, so I made up my mind just to slip on the pilot coat, and a pair of the socks, which at least were dry, while I hung my gown over the chair, before the fire, and then wait patiently until I could gain some tidings of my lost box. When I took a peep at myself in the glass—upon my word, if, with that beastly pilot coat on, I didn't look more like an old apple-woman in the streets than a respectable married female. However, I did feel more comfortable, and it was not the time to think about looks.

Whilst I was seated in front of the fire, with the collar of the coat turned up so as to keep my neck warm, and longing for a nice cup of warm tea, who should come in but the maid with the tray; but no sooner did she catch sight of me, than she took me for a brute of a man, and saying, "I beg your pardon, sir, I thought it was the lady in the next room," she whisked out of the place, although I called out—"Here! here! that tea is for me!" as loud as ever I could.

A lady in the next room, then! thought I to myself—I'll go and ask her to lend me a few things till I can get my own, for I'm sure she can never have the heart to refuse me. So, directly I heard the maid go down stairs, I went and knocked at her door; and when she said, "Come in," I positively felt so ashamed of the figure I knew I was, that I declare I hadn't the courage to look her in the face; so, with my eyes cast down on the ground, I said, "I have to apologize—for intruding upon you—but—I thought that perhaps—you might have a gown or so—that you did not want—and which you would be kind enough to let me—have for a short time—for"——and I was going on to explain the distressing situation I was in, when the creature cut me short by hallooing out, in a horribly gruff voice, "A gown or two that I don't want! hang me if I haven't got a whole box full in the next room that are of no use to me, and that anybody's welcome to."

I was about to express my thanks for what appeared to me to be the height of generosity, especially from one that I had never seen before in all my life, when, on turning my eyes towards the stranger, I couldn't help thinking that whoever it was, she had either got on my beautiful Barège gown, or else one of the very same pattern, and I was just about to march round and see whether it had got a cross body, as mine had, before I accused any one of wearing my things—when, lo and behold! the person called out, "Where the deuce did you get that pea-coat from?"

"Where," I cried, "did *you* get that gown from, I should like to know, sir?" for I no sooner saw the creature's face, than, from the whiskers, I at once knew that it was the young man who had come down with me in the train, and who was sitting there with his coat off, and my beautiful best gown tied by the sleeves in a knot round his neck; and directly he took my plaid shawl off his head, I saw he had split the dress somehow or other all down the back.

"Never mind the gown," he answered, "what business had you to go meddling with my trunk?"

"*I* meddle with *your* trunk!" I exclaimed, "what right had *you* to go running away with *mine* in the shameful way you have?"

However, I was too glad to get back my things, to stand asking questions of a person, who, if it hadn't been for his civility in sharing his umbrella with me, I certainly should have given into custody on the spot. Though when I looked over my box, I declare if the brute hadn't so tossed about and tumbled all my clean things, and so torn and ruined my beautiful Barège, that as soon as I had sufficiently recovered myself, and put on some dry things, I packed up my box again and made the best of my way back to town; for I saw that it was useless to think of spending a fortnight in Guildford, with nothing but a morning-wrapper to put on — especially as by so doing there could be no chance of Edward's knowing a word about the occurrence, which I felt convinced he would be certain to say was entirely my fault.

Directly I set foot in my own house again, I had Miss Emma into the parlour, and showing her the state that my gown was in, all through her abominable stupidity, I told her that she really was so dangerous a blockhead to have near one, that although I wouldn't trust her into the wide world without a place to put her head in that night, still she would be pleased to quit my service first thing in the morning—which I took very good care she did.

And thus ended my acquaintance with Miss Emma, and I very naturally made a vow that the next woman I had in my service should have some little learning in her head, at least. Though positively, it was only jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire, for when the other creature came in she was, if possible, harder to put up with than the good-for-nothing hussey that I had just turned out of the house. Bless us and save us! if her head wasn't crammed brim full of trumpery penny novels and rubbishing romantic melo-dramas. Was there ever such a woman—a great big, fat thing, with a currant-jelly complexion, and always marching about the house with a broom in her hand, either fancying herself "ADA THE BETRAYED," or "AMY," in "LOVE AND MADNESS"—or else sitting for hours, after the parlour dinner was over, all among the dirty plates and dishes, with her feet on the fender, crying her eyes out, over "THE MURDER AT THE OLD SMITHY," or "THE HEADS OF THE HEADLESS," just, for all the world, as you see her in the picture — which will appear in my next number, and which I will tell the gentle reader all about in the next chapter—and a pretty chapter of accidents it will be—for, of all the plagues of servants I ever had anything to do with, that woman certainly was the greatest, and she got me into *one* scrape, that I'm sure I shall never forget to my dying hour—but more of this hereafter.

CHAPTER XIII.

I SHA'N'T SAY ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT WHAT'S COMING IN THE PRESENT CHAPTER. ALL I KNOW IS, THAT IT NEARLY DROVE ME STARK STARING MAD, AND OFTEN AND OFTEN I HAVE IN MY AGONY OF MIND BEEN FORCED TO EXCLAIM, IN THE WORDS OF THAT SWEET SINGER, MR. BRAHAM, AS FOLLOWS:—

"Oh! (goodness gracious me) I can bear my fate no longer,
E'en hope ('pon my word) is banish'd from my soul!"

Recitative to that beautiful ballad of "THROUGH THE FORESTS, THROUGH THE MEADOWS," *in* "*Der Freischutz,*" *and which, indeed, I once had the music of, for that charming girl, Miss Emily B-yl-s, was kind enough to copy it out for me, but where it's gone to now, goodness only knows; most likely some of my beauties of servants have taken it to light the fire, or put the candles up with, or something equally pretty. All I know is, it isn't to be found in my Canterbury, and it can't have walked out of the house by itself, that's clear.*

BEFORE taking up the thread of my story from where I dropped it last month, I should like the gentle reader to know what a dreadful fidget Mr. Sk—n—st—n is. Though it is but right to add, that I have comparatively little or nothing to say against my beloved Edward in other respects. But even if I had been blessed with an angel for a husband, and he had unfortunately been a knag, still, I do verily believe that I should have found my lot just as hard to bear with as I do at present. For if there is one thing more trying than another to one's good temper, or more calculated to rumple the natural smoothness of one's amiable disposition, and to put one out of sorts with the whole world, and everybody in it, it is to have a man always at one, worry worry, fidget fidget, knag knag, from the first thing when he gets up in the morning, to the last thing when he goes to bed at night. Really any unprejudiced person like myself would believe that Mr. Sk—n—st—n was never happy unless he was trying to see how miserable he could make me; for literally and truly, without exaggeration, the man's chief enjoyment seemed to lie in finding fault with, first this thing, then that thing, and then the other. I declare it's my firm opinion to this very day, that he used to think of nothing else all the way home, but what he could make a noise about directly he set foot in the house. Only just let him be able to write his trumpery name in the dust on the hall chairs, or let the cloth not be laid for dinner ready to receive my fine, greedy gentleman, or let me be in my morning wrapper, and not dressed to the very moment that he knocked at the door (of course it was no matter to *him* how much I had been slaving all through the hot day, just to make him comfortable, oh, no, of course it wasn't!)—or even if he couldn't find fault with any of these, only just let the forks be a little dirty between the prongs, or the soup be cold, or a little twopenny-halfpenny caterpillar be in the greens, and then, oh dear me, *there* were fine nuts indeed for my lord to crack—he never knew such a house—he didn't—like a pigstye—of course it *always* was—be better treated at a common tavern, he would (then why didn't he go there, I should like to know, instead of coming home always grumbling away, like an old Grumbler as he is). Then of a morning, too, he had no sooner swallowed his breakfast, than he must go dancing down stairs, and stand fiddling for half an hour in the cellar, pretending to be getting his filthy wine out, though of course I knew what my gentleman was after, as well as he himself did, for up stairs he'd trot, with a face as long as my arm, with a whole pack of trumpery complaints, and, as pleased as Punch with the mare's-nests that my Mr. Clever thought he had discovered. Then out they would come, one after another—first, why weren't the blacking brushes in their proper place, instead of on the kitchen dresser?—or else, hadn't he told me over and over again, that he wouldn't have the servants' candlesticks put into the fire?—or, why were the cinders all about the passage?—or else, he declared the stones were as black as his hat, and had never been cleaned for a twelvemonth,—in fact, the whole place was a perfect disgrace to me, and positively, he would go on fidgeting and knagging about this, that, and the other, until I lost all patience with him, and told him as plainly as I could, "that he had no business at all down in the

kitchen, poking his nose into what didn't concern him, and that all I wished to goodness gracious was, that the cook would pin a dishclout to his coat-tails, and then, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to let him go down to the court at Westminster with it dangling at his heels, if it was only that the Lord Chief Justice of England might see what a molly-coddle and poking meddling thing he was"—and the beauty of it was, that I used to put him in such a passion by telling him that there was a party I knew, who was not a hundred miles from where I was standing, and who was one of the greatest fidgets that I ever came near, and saying in my most tantalising way, "Well, I wouldn't be a fidget, no, not if anybody was to make me a present of all the gold in the mines of Peru that very moment."

Methinks that ever and anon I hear the courteous reader exclaiming, "But, my dear Mrs. Sk—n—st—n, this really has nothing at all to do with the subject of your story." You are right, courteous reader, no more it has; but the truth is, I feel slightly indisposed this morning; in fact, I may say I have not felt myself for this last day or two—I think it is nothing more than a slight attack of the bile after all, and my fair readers will, I 'm sure, agree with me, that when one is bilious, there is nothing does one so much good as to be able to speak one's mind, without any restraint or the fear of ever being taken to task for it. So, as there is no earthly chance of Mr. Sk—n—st—n's ever meeting with these few candid remarks, why, I 'm only too glad to have the opportunity of letting my lady readers know what I really think of my pretty gentleman. However, I will try and rally myself, and coax my wandering thoughts back to my subject, though I 'm afraid it will be a difficult task for me to accomplish in my present state of feeling, for I 've a number of little white stars floating about before my eyes, and my right temple is throbbing and aching as if some imp, out of mere mischief, was thumping away at it with a sledge hammer, and I have a shooting pain just between my shoulders as though some one had got a penknife and was digging it into me every other moment. Our medical adviser says I have gone out and caught that nasty influenza which has been flying about our neighbourhood of late; but don't tell me! I know it 's nothing of the kind, and only my old friend the bile that 's come back again to worry my very life out, and it 's my firm opinion that our medical adviser knows nothing at all about it.

Well, as I was saying, that beauty of a husband of mine is such a fidget, and must always be meddling with what he knows nothing at all about, that I declare all the time I was nursing he wouldn't let me taste even a little pickle. And of course in a family you can't be having a hot joint every day of the week, and I wouldn't give a pin for my dinner when it 's cold meat, and you can't touch even so much as a gherkin, or a walnut, or a simple mouthful of red cabbage, to give it a relish. When the rhubarb was coming in, too, really it was quite heart-rending. I declare, he wouldn't let me eat a spoonful of it, though I had gone to the expense of two shillings, like a silly, to buy as beautiful a bundle as I think I ever set eyes on in all my life, and which positively quite made my mouth water when I saw it at the green-grocer's, it looked such a picture. And the worst of it all was, I had fixed my mind on it so (for, to tell the truth, it 's a favourite dish of mine), that I only eat half a dinner, so as to be able to do justice to the lovely large tart I had made. But Mr. Edward *must* know such a deal about what was good and what was bad for me, that *of course* he would have it that I should go making the child ill, even if I took as much of the fruit as would lie upon a sixpence, only just as a taste, though I told him that I had bought it principally in the light of medicine, as I had heard mother say over and over again that it was a fine thing to sweeten the blood at the change of the year. But, oh dear me, no! of course my Mr. Wiseacre knew a great deal better than people who had lived twice as long and seen twice as much of the world as he had, and wouldn't let me have even a thimble full, just to see if it had turned out as well as I had expected, (drat him!) saying, "I ought to be as well aware as he was, that such things were not fit for me while I was nursing." Ought I, indeed!—though, if it comes to that, what on earth can *he* know about nursing—a molly-coddle! (Augh! I do detest molly-coddles, and all I can say is, you won't catch me marrying one again in a hurry.)

So as I had got a nurse, and she was coming in shortly, and as my poor little dear pet must be weaned some time or other, I thought it would be better to get

that troublesome job over before the new maid entered my service. For I do think it is a perfect cruelty to break a poor thing's rest every night, for a week at least, with the care of a dear little infant, that of course she doesn't care a fig about. Besides, I didn't like to entrust the arduous duty of weaning to a stranger, and my own ever dear mother had made me promise that I would let her have the pleasure of weaning my little chicken. So I thought it would be better, under the circumstances, to make friends with her again, and just get her to take charge of my beautiful little ducks-o'-diamonds for a week or so, especially, too, as Easter Sunday was just coming round; and since I have always made it a religious duty to have a nice little quarter of lamb and a delicious gooseberry pudding with the wood in it, on that day, I felt convinced I should never forgive myself if I wasn't able to touch a mouthful of the pudding, through Mr. Edward's taking a mean advantage of my nursing, as I well knew he would only be too glad to do. Besides, to tell the truth, if there 's one thing that I 'm more partial to than another, it is to gooseberries with the wood in them, for I do think that, with an egg beaten up in them, just to take the roughness off, you have such an exquisite flavour of the tree in the fruit, that really I should like any lady reader of mine who may be unacquainted with that delicacy of the season, just to try it, (though I can hardly bring myself to believe, that out of the thirty-nine thousand readers I have every month, there can be one among the number who has been wicked heathen enough to have allowed every Easter Sunday of her life to have gone by, without having so much as once partaken of a gooseberry pudding with the wood in it—if so, I blush for her.) Oh! with plenty of sugar, it is delicious; indeed, I may say, heavenly.

While upon this topic, I think it is but right to add, that I have always, ever since I was a child, made it a solemn duty to observe, with the greatest strictness, all the feasts which have been ordained by our venerable mother church. Thank goodness, I can lay my head on my pillow at night and safely say, that I have never allowed a single year to pass over my head without partaking with great devotion and extreme relish of the plum-pudding and mince-pie of Christmas, the pancake of Shrove Tuesday (by the bye, with a spoonful of gin, it eats just like ratafia, I can assure you) and the divine gooseberry tart of Easter Sunday; though, with all my enthusiasm, I regret to state, I can't say as much for that horrid salt cod of Ash Wednesday. I cannot let the subject drop here, without adding, that it has cut me to the heart to see a nasty barbarous innovating spirit growing up among us of late, which threatens to destroy all the sacred institutions of our country, and to roll the plum-pudding of our forefathers in the dust. Nor can I, before quitting the theme, help giving this solemn warning to the wives and mothers of England, "Hold fast to your pancakes, or they will be snatched from you before many Shrove Tuesdays are over your heads, as sure as my name is Sk—n—st—n." If the ruthless despoilers must pull down something, why let them tear our salt fish from us; but in the name of all that is great and good, let them spare us the agony of seeing the gooseberry pudding of our best affections trampled under foot.

However, I must leave my gooseberry pudding for awhile, and return to that sentimental novel-reading creature of a Betsy, of whom I spoke in my last chapter. There was a nice bit of goods for a well regulated establishment like mine! How people can ever bring their minds to give characters to such idle, good-for-nothing affected toads, is a mystery to me, and from the character I had with her, I 'm sure I expected that she would have proved nothing less than the treasure I had been on the constant look out for ever since I was married. Lord-a'-mercy upon the woman, I don't suppose there ever was (or ever will be again, let us hope) another creature like her. I declare, unless you kept her right under your nose all day long, there was no getting her to do a single thing properly; for positively she was so wrapt up in her romances, that directly my eye was off her, she was sure to pull the "HEADS OF THE HEADLESS" out of her pocket, or else spread out "MARIANNE THE CHILD OF CHARITY," right before her on the kitchen dresser, and no matter what she was at, there she would go rubbing and reading and snivelling away, paying a great deal more attention to her trumpery pennyworth of "soul-stirring interest," than to my work. I 'm sure that to have made her perfectly happy, all she wanted was to have been allowed to scrub down the stairs with a

reading-desk set up before her, or else to stick some highly exciting nautico-domestic rubbish at the top of her broom, and read while she swept—in the same way as the military bands stick their music on their hautboys and things, so that they may play while they march.

For, upon my word, often and often have I, after ringing two or three times for the sentimental *lady*, gone down in the kitchen, and found her with a snuff to the candle as big as a toadstool, and all of a tremble like an Italian greyhound, over the "CASTLE FIEND, or *the Fate of the Loved and the Lost, and the Ten Mysteries*," or some other powerfully written nonsense; and if in my vexation I snatched it from her hand, I was sure to find that, instead of minding the needlework I had given her, she had been wasting the whole of her evening with such stuff as this:

"Hush! some one comes," said the Baron Mavaracordo to Canoni—a man of strange aspect and apparel—as they were seated in a richly decorated room in Strademoor Castle.

"My lord," said a man-at-arms, "there come three travellers through the storm, and demand admittance to the castle."

"Do they proclaim their calling and degree?"

"They do not; but in the name of hospitality as wanderers, they demand admittance. One is a female, but they are well mounted; and one looks warlike, although clad not in the garments of a knight." (Clad not! Pretty talk that for a common soldier—of the dark ages, too.)

"Admit them; and, with all imaginable speed, show them to the painted closet. I will see them there."

When the man-at-arms had left to perform his errand, the baron turned to his companion, and said—"It is they."

It is they!—*is it* they indeed? There's soul-stirring interest for you, all about your grand Baron Mavaracordo's, who can't speak even good grammar, and Italian gentlemen of astrological skill, who declare, that "if by the occult sciences that are familiar to them they can only find the knave who threw this here, he should suffer such pangs he dreams not of."

And, bless your heart, she hadn't been in the house a week or so before, I declare to goodness, I don't think there was a saucepan in the place that hadn't its bottom burnt out; for there she would let, no matter what it was, boil and boil away till there wasn't a drop of water left; for what did *she* care about the fish or the potatoes so long as she could have a quiet half-hour's cry over the "BLACK PIRATE," or else be finding out what became of "MARY, THE PRIMROSE GIRL," instead of looking after my greens. It's a perfect miracle to me, too, that we were not all of us burnt in our beds; for when she found that I was one too many for her, and kept throwing her "HEIRESSES OF SACKVILLE" and her "CHILDREN OF TWO FATHERS" behind the fire as fast as she got them, then she must needs go reading in her room half the night through, and smuggling either "THE GIPSY BOY," or else "THE MANIAC FATHER," up to bed with her of a night, robbing herself of her proper rest and me of my candles; and even when I took care to see that she had only an end just long enough to light her into bed, why then, drat her impudence, if the nasty toad didn't burn all the kitchen stuff she could lay her hands upon in the butter-boat, with an old lamp-wick stuck up in the middle.

How on earth the horrid silly could ever have managed to pay for all the works she took in out of the wages I allowed her, and what in the name of goodness she could ever have thought was to become of her in her old age, it would, I'm sure, take a much wiser head than mine to say; for, independently of being a constant subscriber from the commencement to most of the penny novels, I declare nothing would please her stuck-up literary ladyship but she must needs take in a newspaper of her own every week, and be a constant reader of the "Penny Sunday Times," though what to gracious she could have seen in the thing, I can't make out. Positively it used to make me shudder all over, and the blood run quite cold down my back, to see the large, staring, frightful engraving that there was always in the middle of its front page. For as true as each Saturday came round, there was sure to be some great brute of a man, in a Spanish hat and a large black cloak all flying about, striking some very grand theatrical attitude, and flourishing over his head a big carving-knife, to which three or four heavy notes of admiration were hanging, while a poor defenceless woman lay at his feet, with her throat cut as wide open as a cheese, and weltering in a pool of ink.

and the beauty of it was, the thing always had some grand title, like "THE EARL IN HIS JEALOUS RAGE SLAYING THE LADY ISOLINE."

Any one would naturally have fancied that the Penny Sunday Times and the novels at the same price would have been quite enough to have satisfied my lady's love of the horrible; but Lord bless you, no! I declare, there wasn't a single murder or last dying speech and confession cried out in the streets, but she must rush up, all haste, to the door just to have another pen'orth of horrors; and then she would sit herself down, and never let the bit of paper go out of her hand until she had got the whole of the affecting copy of verses at the end of it by heart, and there I should have her marching about the house for weeks afterwards chanting some such nonsense as the following:—

> "Biddle and Sheriff is our sad names,
> And do confess we were much to blame,
> On the 28th of September last,
> We well remember, alas! alas!
> The very thoughts causes us to rue,
> In Eighteen hundred and forty-two."

I declare to goodness, there was no keeping the woman away from the door as soon as she heard those husky vagabonds in the street, shouting away at the top of their cracked post-horn voices, all at once, "The full, true, and particular account" of some cock-and-a-bull-story or other; and whether it was the "as-sas-si-nation of Lew-is Philip, the King of the French," (I'm sure those screaming scoundrels used to assassinate that poor, dear old man at least two or three times a month in our neighbourhood all the winter through,) or whether it was the "full disclosures of an elopement of a certain pretty milliner, not a hundred miles from these parts, with a well-known sporting nobleman, together with authentic copies of all the love-letters found in a silver cigar-case, which was picked up this morning by a respectable butcher in High-street," or indeed no matter what it was, my Miss Betsy was sure to invest a penny in the rubbish, although directly I told her to let me see the nonsense that she had been stupid enough to go wasting her money about, of course, I used to find that it had nothing at all to do with what the fellows had been crying, and was merely some trumped-up rigmarole story, that would have done just as well for York as it did for Camden Town—a pack of wicked scoundrels coming up, three at a time, at the dusk of evening, alarming a quiet neighbourhood, and frightening one out of one's wits by bawling their wicked stories out all of a sudden right under one's window, and robbing the poor maids, who are sure to buy their rubbish, and imposing upon the mistresses, who are certain to read it.

As for the "new and popular songs," too, it's impossible to say how many miles of ballads that Betsy must have bought in her time, at three yards for a halfpenny. Positively, if the drawers in the dresser were not crammed with her "CHERRY RIPES," and her "MISTLETOE BOUGHS," and her "OLD ARM CHAIRS," and her "CORK LEGS," and a pack of other stuff, as full as they could hold, with the stupid engravings at the top of some of them, that had nothing at all to do with the song, for I declare if there wasn't a ship in full sail put as an illustration to "AWAY, AWAY TO THE MOUNTAIN'S BROW!" and a trumpery shepherdess, playing on a pipe to two grubby little lambs, as the picture of "WANTED! A GOVERNESS!"

However, to come back to my gooseberry pudding and my weaning. Well, thanks to that dear good mother of mine, I got the weaning all over so nicely the reader can't tell, though, I'm sorry to say that, thanks to that beauty of a Betsy of mine, the gooseberry pudding with the wood in it, that I had set my heart upon having so, wasn't fit to have been set before a pig, let alone a respectable married female like myself—Augh! I declare I've got the taste of it in my mouth to this very day.

Well, as I was saying, I went by myself round to dear, dear mother's, (who, whatever her faults may be, still I must say has always been a good mother to me,) and after we had had a nice long cry together, and both of us agreed that it was all owing to Mr. Sk—n—st—n's continually trying, all he could, to set me against my own dear parents, as he was, we kissed each other and made friends

again; for, as my darling mother truly said, I had always been her own dear, good girl, and, she would add, whatever might come of it (though, far be it from her to make words between man and wife), that I was a *great* deal too good for that sour, good-for-nothing husband of mine, who, she couldn't help saying, was no gentleman. Then the dear, foolish old soul *would* make me step into the beautiful little back parlour and take a mouthful of luncheon. And then, I declare, she *must* go having up, expressly for me, the beautiful cold, baked rice-pudding that she'd had for dinner only the day before, and which, if it is well browned, and has got plenty of custard, and a stick or two of cinnamon in it, is to my mind as nice a thing as one can put one's lips to. Nor was this all. Really she seemed as if she couldn't make enough of me, for, do what I would, I could not prevent the affectionate silly from opening a fresh bottle of her lovely, best green-ginger wine on the joyful occasion, for the more I told her that I dare not touch a drop of it for the life of me, the more determined she seemed to be to open it.

Oh! upon my word, I don't think I ever passed such a pleasant afternoon as that was. I declare, as I sat there, looking out of that lovely little window, and seeing that superb Regent's Canal winding along like a live eel, with father's majestic barge dancing on its surface, and his gallant heaver fast asleep in the stern, while here and there a child of charity might be seen fishing on the banks, it seemed to me as if, with a slight stretch of the imagination, you might have fancied yourself to have been far away in beautiful Venice, and the swarthy bargeman the sun-burnt gondolier of that romantic clime; while with a little extra play of fancy one might easily have twisted the charity boys seeking the finny tribe into the yellow-legged kingfishers, which I have heard papa's old friend, Mr. Glasscock (who keeps a large Italian warehouse in the neighbourhood, and consequently ought to know something about the country), over and over again say, delight to haunt the Venetian shores.

Oh! it was so beautiful to sit there, eating that heavenly cold baked rice-pudding, till I was afraid I should make myself ill, and hearing dear mother call me everything that was good, and Mr. Sk—n—st—n everything that was bad. "Ah! my dear sweet Caroline," she said, with much feeling and great truth, "how you can ever have brought yourself to put up with the brutal treatment of that disgraceful tyrant of a husband of yours,—of whose conduct I must beg of you, my darling, not to ask me to express any opinion,—is more than I should like to take upon myself to state. All I can say is, my love, that if you had not been a perfect angel, you would have packed up your things, and left the ungrateful monster long ago. But I can see what he is after, my dear; he won't rest easy until he has fidgetted you into an early grave; for I see as plainly as plainly can be, that you are fast giving way under it, and that your appetite is not half as good as it used to be, and that unless you take as much strengthening food as you possibly can, the wretch will break your heart chip by chip before he has done with you. However, it is no business of mine, and Heaven forbid that I should say a word about it! Only I wish to goodness gracious, with all my heart and soul, that it had pleased Providence to have allowed your father to have blessed you with a big brother, and then Mr. Sk—n—st—n would never have dared to have treated you in the way he does. But, as I said before, it is a subject which it pains me much to touch upon, so I shall let it drop, merely observing, that if your respected father had the spirit of a tadpole in him, he could never sit quietly smoking his pipe of an evening, down at the wharf as he does, while he knows, as well as I do, that a big-whiskered fellow is puzzling his wits to find out the quickest way of driving his own innocent, gentle little lamb of a Caroline into a premature coffin. But I have done with the painful theme, my pet; so let me give you a little more ginger, and we will change the conversation to a more lively theme, if you please. By-the-bye, will you, on your return home, remember to mention to that disgraceful husband of yours, that your dear father is now selling the very best screened Wall's-end coals as low as twenty-one shillings a ton."

Well, as I said before, I got the weaning over beautifully. Poor dear mother was delighted at having the job, though father—just like all the selfish men—was quite of a different way of thinking. Of course I kept away from the dear little pet for more than a whole week, though I'm sure I needn't tell my fair readers

that it was a hard, very hard struggle for me to do so, as I made certain that the darling was fretting its poor little life out for want of it. However, when I went to fetch the dear, mother told me that it had been as good as gold all the time, and had never cried once for it; for bless the little chick's heart, it 's got its own mother's sweet temper—so it has.

And upon my word, I had only just got my new nurse in, and my little toodle-loodle-lumpties (if I may be allowed so strong an expression) was only just beginning to take its food nicely, when, lo and behold, if that Easter Sunday didn't pop round upon me! I never knew such a price as gooseberries were — three-and-sixpence for a little tiddy basketful, scarcely enough for one person; and Edward is such a pig at pastry, especially if it 's short crust; though I take good care always to make it flakey. However, it was a solemn feast; and if they had been twenty shillings a quart, I should have felt it my bounden duty to have given as much for them.

On the Saturday before Easter Sunday, I saw a little boy come to the door; and as Miss Betsy was up-stairs, busy with the beds, I went and opened it, when, bless us and save us, if it wasn't a little dirty-faced monkey who had brought round her ladyship's papers for the week from her twopenny-halfpenny news-vender. Oh, yes! there they were—"Penny Sunday Times," as usual, with another horrible engraving; and the fifteenth part of "EMILY FITZORMOND, *or the Deserted One;*" together with the commencement of "ELA THE OUTCAST, *or the Gypsy Girl of Rosemary Dell;*" with the first number of which Nos. 2, 3, and 4, were given gratis. Like a good-natured silly as I was, I went, letting her have the highly-exciting rubbish, instead of tearing it all up, as I ought to have done; and nicely I bit my fingers for my folly, for, just as I might have expected, there she was, all the next day, so interested with that stupid outcast of an Ela, that she couldn't get my lamb down before the fire until it was so late, that when it came to table it was only just warmed through, and every one knows how nice underdone lamb is. However, said I to myself, thank goodness, there's a good large pudding coming, or else I dont know what I should do. But, Lord-a-mercy me! when that came up, I thought I should have died of disgust and vexation, for, drat the novel-reading blockhead, if she hadn't been so taken up with the fate of that bothering fal-lal gipsy-girl of Rosemary Dell, indeed, that I declare, if she didn't go beating up a stale, bad French egg, in my beautiful expensive little green gooseberries, with the wood in them. As she had spoilt the lamb for me, of course I had made little or no dinner, and, let alone my being as hungry as a hunter, I was positively dying to taste my favourite pudding for the first time that year, so that it wasn't until I had put a large dessert-spoonful into my mouth, that I found out what the minx had been doing. And then, Uch! oh la! of all the messes, I thought I should have fainted! Taken the roughness off, indeed—ay, that she had, with a vengeance. Upon my word I was so vexed, I could have set down and had a good cry, I could; but as it was, I merely said to the jade,—"I 'll make you pay soundly for this, you may depend upon it, Miss Betsy; for if I don't have another gooseberry pudding out of your next quarter, my name isn't what it is; and I can tell you this, my fine lady, that if you don't mind your P's and Q's, you 'll find that those trumpery soul-thrilling novels of yours will bring you to a bad end some of these fine mornings, take my word for it."

Oh! if I 'd had my wits about me, and only been able to see my true interests, I should have had none of the stupid scruples of conscience that I had, and have got rid of the girl on the spot—only, thanks to Mr. Edward, he must have it that I was only happy when I was changing, when he knows that all I pray for is, that I could get hold of some good, honest, hard-working maid, that would live and die in my service. As for Miss Betsy, she was quite a hopeless job. Upon my word she was so wrapt up in her works of fiction, that really she would believe any trumpery cock-and-a-bull story that was told her. There really was no trusting her out of my sight, and that 's the truth. Once I went out just to get a mouthful of fresh air in the Park, and on my return found that the hall had been stripped, and the gold watch of Edward's poor dear first wife, which he had given me before we were married, had been carried off the mantelpiece by a fellow, whom she would have was the clergyman of the parish, and who, she said, requested to be allowed to write a letter to me about the Easter

offering. If, too, by any accident, I let the key of the area-gate out of my possession for more than a minute, she was certain to have down in the kitchen the first gipsy woman, with her trumpery box of sewing cottons to sell, that she could lay hold of, just to tell her rubbishing fortune, and who, after stuffing her head that she saw by the lines in her great, ugly, coarse hand, that she was to marry a certain black-eyed young baker, and was to have her nine children and a shay-cart, and promising her, moreover, a large fortune into the bargain, would be certain to wind up by walking off with my silver spoons. The beauty of it was, too, that when I used to rate the romantic idiot soundly for her disgusting simplicity, telling her that she ought to be whipped at the cart's tail for encouraging a pack of thieves in the way she did, upon my word if she wouldn't, with all the coolness in the world, go off lamenting the degraded state of the robbers of the present day, saying that they were not half the fine set of people that they used to be in "the good old times and days of yore;" and then she'd actually have the impudence to look me in the face, and ask me if I knew anything about the great Jack Sheppard, declaring that he was the robber for her money, for he never shed blood but once; and whatever his faults might have been, the book that had been written upon him said very beautifully that he never told a lie.

This was the secret of it all. Of course, with the high-flown notions she had got of robbers, and brigands, and pirates, and a pack of other pickpockets, out of her weekly pennyworths of romantic rodomontades; and believing that the vagabonds possessed every virtue under the sun, with merely the slight drawback of occasionally wanting either your money or your life, she was a common victim to every villain that chose to impose upon her. I declare she got me into one scrape by her credulity that nearly proved the death of me, (though it wasn't the one that I spoke of last month, and for which I sent her away.)

You see, summer was just coming on, and the fine weather had set in; so I went to work, looking up my light dresses; and it's very lucky I did so, for there was scarcely any of them that were fit to put on. They were all as yellow as marigolds; so I packed them off to the wash, every one except a very nice clear muslin, which really was so slightly discoloured, that it seemed to me worse than a sin to go giving a matter of eightpence to have it washed, when with a nice dark shawl it would look nearly clean, and do very well for a walk round the park some fine day at the end of the week. When I saw my beautiful Swiss cambric again, with its sweet pretty little, bright-red flower upon it, and its rich skirt and four rows of deep flounces, I couldn't for the life of me help saying to myself, "Oh, you are a perfect love, I declare! and when you're nicely clear-starched you'll look superb, with my pink drawn silk bonnet and green shot-silk scarf, next Sunday at church." And the more I looked at it, the more it struck me that I might just as well coax my own dear Edward, the first evening he was in one of his merry humours, to consent to have a one-horse fly for half the day; and then after church we could go round and make a number of calls that I was positively dying to rub off, and afterwards take a drive round Hyde Park, and wind up with a promenade in Kensington Gardens. Nothing on earth would have given me greater pleasure than to have taken my darling good mother with me, as I knew it would do her so much good; but then she always *will* dress so funny, and I felt convinced that, as matters stood, it would not be safe to trust the dear old soul with Edward a whole afternoon in a shut-up fly, or they would be certain to get to high words again, and then I should never forgive myself.

Well, on the Monday, off I packed my dresses, with the dirty linen, to the wash, and gave the woman a whole string of directions as to how I wanted them done. When the Saturday came, I declare it was such a fine warm day, that I slipped on the clear muslin that I had kept back, and went out in the afternoon to pay the last week's bills; and while I was in the neighbourhood, I thought I might just as well run round to Mrs. L—ckl—y's, and ask that sweet woman to take a walk down Oxford-street with me and look at the shops; for, to tell the truth, I felt that I wanted a mouthful of fresh air. So off Mrs. L—ckl—y and I set together; and though there was not so much as a goat's hair or a mare's tail to be seen in the sky when we started, of course, as usual, we had no sooner set foot in Regent-street than it began to spit a bit. However, as we thought it would not last, and we didn't see the fun of spoiling our bonnets, why we both of us

agreed that it would be best to stop into Hodge and Lowman's, and just look at a few things that we didn't want, until it had given over. But, oh dear, no! nothing of the kind; for though we must have stopped there, I should say, a good half-hour, pulling the things over, and having first this dress out of the window, and then that, until we put the poor man to such trouble, that Mrs. L—ckl—y whispered to me that she really thought that she must buy a yard or two of sarsnet ribbon, just for the look of the thing; it really seemed as if the fates had conspired against my clear muslin, for, upon my word, it only kept getting worse and worse, and came down at last in such straight lines, that it really looked as if it was raining iron wires. So, as it was getting close to dinner time, and I thought Edward would be coming home and fidgetting again about the place for want of his dinner, I told Mrs. L—ckl—y, that, since a cab up to her house, in Albany-street, would come to the same money as the bus, why it would be much better to take one, instead of having a parcel of wet umbrellas stuck right against one's knees, and the dirty boots of the men wiped right on the flounces of one's dress —especially, too, as I knew Mrs. L—ckl—y had too much of the lady in her ever to be mean enough to accept of my trumpery sixpence towards such a trifle as the shilling fare. Accordingly, we jumped into the first cab we could catch, and on the road I made up my mind pretty quickly not to go taking the thing on to P—rk V—ll—ge, for I saw, as plain as the nose on my face, that I should have the whole fare to pay if I did, for, of course it would look just as bad for me to accept of her beggarly sixpence as it would for her ever to think of taking mine. When the cab stopped at Mrs. L—ckl—y's, I told her I would step in and arrange my hair just for a minute, and of course, I couldn't do less than *offer* to pay the fare, never for an instant fancying that she would be stingy enough to take advantage of my generosity; but, like a stupid, I must go overdoing it, for the more she kept refusing, the more I kept pressing, and when she protested "she wouldn't listen to such a thing for a moment," I (just for the look of the thing) directly declared that I would insist upon doing it, whereupon, drat it, if her ladyship wasn't shabby enough to say, "Well, then, if you *insist* upon it, my dear, I suppose I must give way," and scampered off into the house, leaving me with that shameful impostor of a cabman, who wouldn't be satisfied with anything less than eighteenpence. Augh! it isn't the trumpery one-and-sixpence that I grumble about, but the nasty mean spirit in which I was left to pay it. Thank goodness, *I* couldn't be guilty of such meanness—no, not if I was to die for it to-morrow; but then, you know, some people are so different to others.

Well, after I had sat for a minute, twiddling my thumbs in Mrs. L—ckl—y's front parlour, I said, that as it seemed to be holding up a little, I thought that if she would be kind enough to lend me an umbrella, I should be able to get as far as our house without much inconvenience. So I had my umbrella, and off I started; but then, bother take the thing! it was one of those thin wiry Germans, with ribs no thicker than bodkins, and as the wind was rather high, I declare if, at the very first turning I came to, the trumpery bit of goods didn't turn right inside out, and do what I would, I could neither get it down nor back again into its proper shape, and there was I obliged to go stalking all up Albany-street, holding up the inverted thing, looking like a great big funnel, and which, instead of keeping the rain off me, of course only served to collect all the water over my head like a cistern, which, being full of holes, of course it let through again, just like a shower-bath, and while I kept continually looking up to see where the dickens all the water that was pouring down upon me could come from, I kept stepping into all kinds of puddles, right up to the cotton tops of my white silk stockings, so that by the time I got home, I was positively soaking, and all my hair and things hung about me, for all the world like the feathers of the cocks and hens on a rainy day.

As soon as I got up-stairs in the bed-room, I rang for Betsey, and asked her if they'd brought the clean things home from the wash, for I thought I'd better put on my clean morning wrapper.

"Oh, yes, mum," she answered, "they brought them an hour or two ago."

"Then just bring them up-stairs to me, there's a good girl," I replied.

"If you please, mum," she returned, "a man called immediately after they'd brought them, and said that the wrong basket had been left by mistake, and took it away, saying, he would bring ours in a minute or two."

"And do you mean to stand there, woman, and tell me that you were simpleton enough to give it?" I continued, as the whole truth flashed upon me; for mother had had the very same wicked trick played off upon her, and had cautioned me against it herself.

"Yes, mum, I did," she answered, quite coolly, "and he 's never been back since."

"Of course he hasn't," I shrieked out, "and never will you set eyes upon him, or my clean linen again. Oh! you good-for-nothing, shameful, novel-reading, story-believing hussy. Now, see what your highly exciting romances have led you to do. Here am I, who have always been the best of mistresses to you, wet to the skin, and without a clean morning wrapper to put on, nor even so much as a dress fit to go to church in to-morrow, to say nothing of the two pairs of beautiful linen sheets that you 've wilfully lost for me, and the very white trousers that my husband was married in, and which I wouldn't have parted with for untold gold. There, go down stairs and hide your face, and think how you 'll relish it when you have to pay for it, and find, as you most assuredly will, that you haven't got a penny to receive at the end of the year."

However, it was useless fretting; there were three of as beautiful summer dresses as ever were made, and the beautiful afternoon's ride I had promised myself after church on the morrow, all gone: for my sweet pretty Swiss cambric was among the number, and I could never think of walking in Kensington Gardens in that grubby, seedy, hot, plaid thing, that I had worn all the winter through. As I said before, it was useless fretting, so I changed from top to toe, and put on some of the things I had taken off during the week, which, to say the least, were dry; and, as I wasn't in the humour to care a pin how I looked, why, I popped on my flannel dressing-gown, for, to tell the truth, I felt rather chilly, and Mr. Edward might tell me, for the hundredth time, that I looked like an old watchman in it, as much as he pleased, for what I cared.

At dinner, just as we were taking cheese, there came that plaguy Saturday night ring at our area-bell, and I could have staked my existence that it was that dirty-faced young monkey of a boy again, bringing Miss Betsy another pen'orth of her precious "EMILY FITZORMOND," and the fifth part of that bothering, vagabond "outcast" of an "ELA."

It was as much as I could do to prevent myself from jumping off my seat, and rushing down stairs, and tearing the whole of the high-flown fustian out of the hussy's hand, just as she was enjoying that "Sunday Times" picture, as I knew she was. But, luckily for her, I felt far from myself, for I was as sure as sure could be that I had caught such a cold as would play old gooseberry with me,—if I might be allowed so strong an expression,—and I didn't take it in time.

Nor was I wrong, for scarcely was the dinner cleared away, than on came the shivers, just as I expected, and I kept going hot and cold by turns, and I declare all my joints ached so, that as I walked across the room, I felt as if I could have fallen down and gone all to pieces, just like the dancing skeleton in the Fantoccini, while my poor old knees began to shoot away as if some one was digging a carving-fork into them; and my wretched back was as cold as though a person was amusing himself by pouring buckets of spring water right down between my shoulders; and though I put on all the shawls and cloaks I had got in the house, and sat with my nose right in the fire, still I could not get warm. When I complained to Mr. Edward of how ill I felt, he only answered, "The fact is, my dear, you've caught a violent cold," (as if I didn't know that as well as he did,) "and the sooner you get yourself up-stairs to bed the better; and if you follow my advice, you'd have it warmed first, and take a good large basinful of gruel, with a James's powder, for supper."

"Gruel and James's powder, indeed!" I replied, with much sarcasm; "you wont gruel and James's powder me, I can tell you, sir;—as if *I* didn't know what's good for a cold;—a glass of hot Punch, with a bit of butter, the size of a walnut; and that's what *I* call good for a cold."

"For goodness' sake mind, my love, and tallow your nose as well," returned Mr. Knowall.

"Yes, Mr. Edward," I replied, "I *shall* tallow my nose as well, and tie my flannel petticoat round my head into the bargain—that's what I shall do."

"And a lot of good it 'll do you," he answered. "A pack of old woman's rubbish."

"You call it old woman's rubbish, do you?—then I don't," I continued, with my customary satire. "I call it an excellent remedy—that's what I call it."

"But how can the tallow on your nose do you any good, I should like to know!" he returned.

"You'd like to know?" I said, in my bitterest way—"I dare say you would, but I'm not going to tell you."

"Yes; but why is it an excellent remedy?" he inquired, grinning in a way I didn't half like.

"Because it is," I replied, with my usual argument.

"Yes; but what on earth do you use it for?" he continued.

"Because I do," I answered, determined to have the best of it.

As I wasn't going to stop there wasting my argumentative powers upon a man who was deaf to reason, I put an end to his sneers by ringing the bell for that Betsy, and told her to get some boiling water ready as soon as she could, for I wanted to have my bed warmed, and to be sure and stand the warming-pan near the fire for a few minutes before putting the water in it, so that I might have it as hot as I could. We always used one of the new patent hot-water warming-pans, because with them one hasn't that nasty coal-gassy smell that the old-fashioned things invariably leave behind them; and there's no chance—even if the pan 's left to stand a moment in the bed—of having one's best linen sheets scorched, and with large brown marks upon them as if they were stuck over with pancakes.

I thought my lady was taking her time nicely to boil a trumpery kettle full of water. So, even ill as I was, I couldn't help just slipping quietly down stairs, and popping in upon her when she least expected me. Hoity-toity! was there ever such a sight!—I thought I should have dropped down when I saw it. My beautiful kitchen for all the world like a cheap Jack's cart at a fair—saucepans here, kettles there, crockery everywhere, while my beauty was sitting with her toes cocked up on the fender, and that trumpery "GIPSY GIRL OF ROSEMARY DELL" in her hand, as I live, and crying water-spouts over that stupid, disgusting "OUTCAST" of an "ELA." There was our cat, too, right in the frying-pan, and the house-flannel and the scrubbing-brush in the fish-kettle, and that precious "EMILY FITZORMOND, *or the Deserted One*," lying on the ground, with the "RANGER OF THE TOMB" by her side, and "FATHERLESS FANNY, or the *Mysterious* Orphan," as the thing was called, all over grease, and without even so much as a wrapper to its back, pitched about anywhere. There were all the dirty plates and dishes besides, just as they had come down from dinner more than an hour ago, side by side with the breakfast things, which she had got to wash up before we could have even a mouthful of tea; and although it was nearly dark, I declare she hadn't so much as cleaned a single candlestick all the day through, for they were standing on the hob with all the hot tallow running out of them, and dripping into one of my best new block-tin saucepans. As I'm a Christian, drat the woman, if she hadn't stuck my beautiful bright copper warming-pan, too, (that hadn't been used more than twice, and which I picked up, quite a bargain, at a broker's only a year ago,) right on the top of the oven, and so close to the fire, that, upon my word, when I went to take hold of it, it was nearly red hot, while of course her head was so full of her romantic rubbish, that she hadn't so much as thought about the hot water; for, instead of putting the kettle on, she hadn't even taken the nasty, greasy gridiron on which she had done our pork chops off the fire.

This, I must confess, was more than common flesh and blood like mine could bear; so I flew at my duchess, and snatching out of her hand her grand works,—which should be in every person's library!" indeed,—I bundled them all into what, to my mind, was a much fitter place for them—the fire; and what 's more, I put the kettle right on top of them, and by the time I had done reading the minx such a lecture as she wont forget in a hurry, thank goodness I had the kettle boiling away quite nicely.

All this exertion—ill as I was—took such an effect on my delicate nerves, that I determined upon going to bed directly. So I told her to fill the warming-pan,

and take it up stairs as quick as she could, while I went to make myself a glass of nice hot punch, with a bit of butter and plenty of sugar in it, and which, with a bit of tallow (despite all Mr. Edward's low sneers) just the size of a pea, rubbed over the bridge of my nose, is—as my lady readers will agree with me—as good a thing as one can fly to when one 's got a horrid cold coming on one.

When I got up stairs, there was my lady in her sulks, of course, warming the bed as if she had fallen asleep over it. So as I wasn't going to put up with any of her tantrums, I went behind her, and telling her that I would show her how to warm the bed, I seized hold of her arm and pushed it backwards and forwards so fast that I could hear all the water wabble again in it—little dreaming at the time that the solder of the nasty twopenny halfpenny bit of goods had got melted, all through Miss Betsy's standing it so long and so close to the fire as she had, and that I was actually shaking the water out of it all over my bed, as fast as if the thing had been a watering-pot. The worst of it was, too, that the beastly new-fangled warming-pan must have held a gallon if it did a spoonful; and seeing that Miss Betsey wanted to get down stairs again, to some more of her trumpery novels, as I thought, I wouldn't let her go, but make her stand shaking the leaky thing up and down the sheets—particularly on my side too—until I had tied my flannel petticoat nicely over my night-cap, and finished all my punch, and had put all my things by, just out of aggravation, to keep her up there as long as I could, and was quite ready to get into bed.

When Miss Betsy had gone, and I had let down the night-bolt—I declare I had been dawdling about so long in the cold, that I was quite frightened lest I should have taken another chill—putting out the candle, I jumped into bed as quick as ever I could. And then, oh lud-a'-mercy me! what a pretty pickle it was in, to be sure. If the linen sheets weren't positively just like sheets of water, and the whole bed as wet as the bed of the River Thames. I tumbled out again like lightning, as any one may easily imagine, when, I declare, if all my night-clothes weren't as wet and cold as a dog's nose, and the worst of it was, they would keep clinging to me as if they were so much wet blotting-paper. I rushed to the bell, and pulled, and pulled, and pulled away, until Mr. Sk—n—st—n must have thought either that I had set the house on fire, or overlaid my dear little lamb, or found a brute of a man under the bed; for up he came, gasping away, crying out, "What on earth is the matter, Caroline?" and five minutes afterwards, up Miss Betsy sauntered, as leisurely as if nothing at all had happened.

"The matter," I cried, pulling off the bed-clothes, and throwing aside the sheet, that was so wet you might have wrung it—"Look here," I said, holding up the soaking blanket; and which, when I let it go, I declare, fell with a flop upon the ground, for all the world as if it had been a batter-pudding—"And look here, too," I cried, showing him the feather-bed tick, which really looked as dark as a slate with the wet—"Just come and feel it yourself, and say if it isn't like a sponge, and then ask yourself how you 'll like to sleep upon it all night, for sleep upon it you must, as there isn't another in the house. What 's more, too, these are the only sheets that you can have to lie upon to-night, for, thanks to that Miss Betsey there, she must not only think fit to give away all the clean ones I had home from the wash this very day, to the first person that chose to come and ask for them, but to make the thing complete, she must needs go burning a hole in the hot water warming-pan, and drenching my only remaining pair; and just because she knew I had caught a severe cold, and wanted a comfortable warm bed to set me right again. Oh, you wicked, abominable, novel-reading hussy you! you 'll be the death of me before you 've done with me, you will! How you can have the impudence to stand there and look me in the face, and not expect the floor to open and swallow you up for your shameful goings on—and how *you*, too, Mr. Edward," I continued, turning to Mr. Sk—n—st—n, "how you can stand there, as quiet as a common cab-horse, and see your poor wife worried into her grave in this way by that wicked woman, and not send her about her business this very moment, is beyond my limited powers to comprehend."

But of course the only answer my gentleman could make me was to tell Miss Betsy to go down stairs; and then, if he didn't turn round as cool as a cucumber, and tell me to my own face that it was all my fault (my fault!—mark, if you please, gentle reader). But it was just what I had expected—indeed, I had said

as much to myself—of course, it was all *my* fault! *I* had done it all, *I* had —and that minx of a *Betsy* had had nothing to do with it—of course *I* had burnt the hole in the warming-pan, and filled it with water, to be sure; and more than that, *I* had warmed the bed, I suppose—though, as I very cleverly told my lord duke, if I *had*, *I* had done it in my sleep, and there was an end of it. Then gave it Mr. Edward so soundly, and told him what I thought of him so plainly, and made him so heartily ashamed of himself, that, upon my word, at last he marched up to the drawers, and taking his razors and a clean night-gown and night-cap, with all the impudence in the world, told me to my face he was going to sleep out. So I told him very quietly that he might do just as he pleased about that; but if he did, to rest assured, that as sure as his and my name were Sk—n—st—n, I 'd never pass another night under his roof. But my gentleman only turned on his heel and walked himself off as grandly down stairs as if he were doing some mighty fine action, and thinking, of course, that I should run after and call him back. But, oh dear, no!—I wasn't going to make such a silly of myself as that—no!—not if he were the only man in the world.

But, thank goodness, I 've got a spirit of my own, and however much I might have felt the absence of the monster, still I was determined not to show it. So directly I heard the street-door slam, I marched up stairs, and ringing the bell for Betsy, made her carry down her own mattress and blankets for me to sleep on, telling her that she might lie upon the bare bedstead, if she pleased, and that if, in the morning, she got up and found herself striped all over with the marks of the bits of wood at the bottom of it, like a herring just taken off a gridiron, why she needn't blame me, as she would have only herself to thank for it.

Not so much as a wink of sleep could I get, but did nothing but cry and fidget all that miserable night through. Not that I cared about Mr. Edward leaving me all alone in my distress at a time when he didn't know whether I had a bed to lie down upon or not, or whether my severe cold might not take a serious turn, and end in a rheumatic fever, or goodness knows what,—it wasn't this I cared about, I say; but it was the callous way in which he did it—not so much as saying where a person might find him, supposing anything happened to one, and which I felt I never should be able to forget to my dying day. But I wasn't going to submit to be treated worse than a parish orphan, so directly I heard the chimney-sweeps in the street, I tumbled out of bed, and merely taking the child and my hair-brush and such things as I couldn't do without for a day or two, I went down stairs; and having cut off a slice of bread-and-butter, just to keep the wind out of my stomach, I wrote my lord a short letter, telling him that I had left his house

FOR EVER!!!

and signing it—"Your heart-broken and affectionate—though she-can-never-consent-to-live-with-you-again—wife CAROLINE," and then putting the key of the tea-caddy inside the note, I left it with Betsy, telling her to give it to her master when he came home, and to be sure and have the breakfast all ready and comfortable for him by nine o'clock at the latest—and that I was going to Mrs. B—ff—n's, but on no account to tell Mr. Sk—n—st—n where I had gone, as I wouldn't have him know it for the world. Then off I went, with Kate in my arms and a tear in my eye, and made the best of my way round to dear mother's, as I felt convinced, even if Betsy didn't tell my husband, *that* would be the first place to which he would fly to seek me, and that I should have him come rushing round to me and begging and praying of me to return to his disconsolate home, before a couple of hours were over my head.

When I reached my own dear mother's, and told what had happened, oh, it would have done any married lady's heart good to have seen the affectionate old lady kiss me and fondle me, vowing I had got her own fine spirit, and that she was so delighted to find that I was no worm, and that the noble way in which I had acted would teach Mr. Sk—n—st—n as much. When I asked her whether she was perfectly sure that Edward would come after me, she tried to make my mind easy by telling me that it was as sure as coals were coals—though this far from quelled my fears; for from the quality of the ton Father had last sent us, I

had my doubts upon that subject. But mother went on, saying, "The men are always sure to come after one the first time, my angel—though a second, I must confess, grows a little dangerous; and with a person of Mr. Sk—n—st—n's disposition, however much I might recommend you once to declare you had separated yourself from him for ever, still I should not, as a mother, like to advise you to try it twice, unless, indeed, you could get him beforehand to agree to allow you a very handsome separate maintenance, as the wretch ought to do, my dove. Now, I recollect about three years after you were born, sweetest, I had a serious quarrel with Mr. B—ff—n, your father, about the parson's nose, I think, of as fine and fat a duck as ever came to table—and which tit-bit we were both extremely partial to. And the long and short of it was, he said such things to me that I felt I ought not to stop another minute in the house of such a man. So, accordingly, since all my relations lived in Kent, I engaged a small bed out by the night, and left your wretch of a father, my love—for ever! ! But, as I expected, he soon found out where I had gone to, and, rushing round, he threw himself at my feet, and began tearing his poor dear bald head so frightfully, that I was obliged to consent to return to his home, and see whether the contrition he professed was really sincere or not by the present he made me; but, when I tell you, my life, that the next day he only brought me home a trumpery plated ale tankard, which, of course, was more for himself than it was for me, you will be able to judge of the deceitfulness of man, and, if you take my advice, you will stipulate to have from Mr. Sk—n—st—n whatever you may want before you are weak enough to consent to make him happy by returning home. Remember, my angel, such chances seldom occur more than once in a poor woman's lifetime; so, if you will listen to me, you will not throw away this golden opportunity, but sit down quietly now, and just turn over in your mind whether you think you could bring yourself ever to live under the same roof with Mr. Sk—n—st—n again, even if he were to promise to insure his life in your favour, so as to make you comfortable after his death, my angel, or else to double the money he allows you for the housekeeping every week, or any other little trifling sign of repentance which you think he ought to show, my poppet. Only mark my words—'If you don't strike the iron while it's hot, you'll live to repent it, as your too trusting mother has over and over again done, my lamb!'"

Upon my word, if dear mother wasn't as good as a witch, for, in about a couple of hours, round came Mr. Sk—n—st—n all of a fluster. Then, of course, he was all sorrow and affection, and nothing was *too* good for me, and, if I would only *consent* to come back again, he'd be the happiest of men. Oh! I was so glad to think that poor *I* had humbled my grand lord, no one can tell; and when I saw that tear twinkling in the corner of his eye, I really couldn't for the life of me help smiling inwardly, with honest pride, to think of the triumph I had gained, and that I had brought my headstrong gentleman to his proper senses, and made him conscious of my worth. Though, of course, he must go begging and praying of me, after a bit, that I would keep all my troubles about my servants to myself for the future, and not be always tormenting him with them when he came home of an evening, tired, from business, saying that then he was sure we should go on so comfortably together. So I told him that it was foolish of him to expect that we could ever get a good servant who would do all the work of that great big house, and clean the boots and knives, and be dressed in the afternoon to answer the door as well; and, as I saw that he was just in the humour not to refuse me anything, and I had made up my mind long ago to have a page in the house, just like the boy at the L—ckl—y's, directly I could wheedle my husband into it, I said that, unless some alteration was made in our establishment, I was sure I should be in my grave before long. And when he said, "What alteration do you propose, my dear?—for goodness' sake, have anything you like, if it will only put an end to these disturbances between us,"—I pretty soon clenched the business, and got him to promise I might get a nice genteel youth, and put him in a handsome livery, who could follow us to church with the prayer-books, (which I do think looks *so* respectable;) or, if ever I went out for a walk, could come trotting after me, and enable me to go past the barracks in Albany-street without the fear of being insulted by those soldier fellows!

So we went home so pleasantly together, the reader don't know; and, bless

my Edward's kind heart, when I reminded him of the dresses, and sheets, and things I had lost, if he didn't give me a very handsome cheque indeed, to buy some new ones with, though I said at the time, when I took it, that it was more than I wanted. But, to do my husband justice, though he is very hasty, I 'm sure no one can strive more than he does to make amends for it afterwards.

I 'll warrant he doesn't go sleeping out again in a hurry!

CHAPTER XIV.

NOW THANK GOODNESS I 'VE COME TO THAT MISCHIEVOUS YOUNG MONKEY OF A PAGE, WHO CERTAINLY WAS MORE THAN ONE POOR WOMAN COULD MANAGE, AND LITERALLY AND TRULY NOTHING LESS THAN A MILLSTONE ROUND MY NECK, (IF I MAY BE ALLOWED SO STRONG AN EXPRESSION,) AND WHILE MY HAND 'S IN, I SHALL JUST TAKE THE LIBERTY OF SPEAKING MY MIND VERY FREELY ABOUT THE GOINGS ON, TOO, OF THAT HIGHTY-FLIGHTY BEAUTY OF A NURSE (I NEVER KNEW SUCH A NURSE) OF A MISS SARAH OF MINE.

> ' My pretty page."
>
> POPULAR DUET, *which I remember when I was at school at Boulogne, poor Miss Rippon was so fond of singing with that impudent wretch of a French music-master, whom she afterwards ran away with; though what she could ever have seen in the man, is more than I could ever make out.*

> " With a few alterations, oh, la!
> We 'll make a beautiful boy.
>
> COMIC SONG.

> " Of all the girls that are so smart,
> There 's none like pretty Sally."
>
> SALLY IN OUR ALLEY.

IT strikes me, now I come to think of it, that I have mentioned somewhere before, that the only thing I prayed for when I went to bed of a night was, that Providence would send me a servant that would live and die with me. Consequently, it seemed to me that now or never was my time to pitch upon some nice well-disposed lad, who would do for my page in my prime, and grow up to be a footman to me in my old age. So what did my stupid good-nature prompt me to do. but to march down one fine morning to St. Giles' workhouse, where often and often, on my way down to Edward's chambers, I had noticed several nice-looking boys, with particularly clean collars, standing on the steps waiting to be taken as apprentices. For of course I was not going to be such a silly as to take some young monkey into my service, and then just after I had taught him his business, to have him wanting to be off to *better* himself, indeed! — before his livery was thoroughly worn out, too, may be. Besides, as we had a young family growing up about us, I felt that it was my duty to save when I could, for all the world knows that a penny saved is twopence gained—though I never could, for the life of me, make out how that could be, notwithstanding I have had it explained to me by a pack of wiseacres over and over again. And, under the circumstances, I'm sure I didn't see the joke of paying a matter of ten pounds a year or so to a little chit of a thing, that would have to get on a chair to rub down my parlour tables. So as I could have an apprentice from the workhouse without paying any wages at all, and they 'd give five pounds into the bargain, which would just do for the brat's livery, why I pretty soon called upon the master of the place, to look over the stock of youths he had on hand, and see if they were anything like the very attractive sample he had got stuck so conspicuously at the door

But though I had up some dozen of young urchins, I pretty soon saw that they were nothing at all equal to the pattern outside; and the beauty of it was, that the man wanted to persuade me that a nasty little crumpet-faced, moist-sugar-haired, stunted orphan, was the very one to suit me, saying, "That the lad had got more marks for morals than any other boy in the school." But, "No, thank you," I replied; "I think I'll take that youth, if you please," pointing to the best-looking of the show ones: for I was determined to do the same here as I do with those dreadful cheats of linendrapers, and be served from the superior articles ticketed up in the window.

I wasn't long before I had my young Turk's livery, and a beautiful one it was, to be sure. Oh, when it came home, I think it looked the sweetest thing I ever set eyes upon in all my life. The jacket was a claret, with three rows of sugar-loaf buttons, as close together as a rope of onions; and there were a pair of nice quiet dark-coloured pantaloons, running rather into the port-wine than partaking of the claret; and to guard against the brat's growing out of them before they were fairly worn out, I had taken the wise precaution of having two or three tucks put in at the bottom of them — though, really and truly for the matter of that, I might just as well have let it alone — for positively the urchin shot up so fast that I do think he must have grown six tucks, at least, the first year he was with me. And the worst of it was, your clarets do fade so, that by the time the tucks were let out, his trousers had got so plaguy light, and the place where the tucks had been was so plaguy dark, that upon my word the bottom of his legs had large black rings round them like the legs of an imitation bamboo bedstead. And though I tried to get them over his boots, yet, do as I would, I could not manage it: for if I made him strap them down, there were a good three inches of shirt showing all below his jacket, and if I made him brace them up, there were all the tops of his dirty socks to be seen above his boots.

I don't know whether it was that the young monkey knew that I had bound myself to keep him for five years or not; but he certainly did play old goose berry with my lovely livery in a most shameful way. Positively, he couldn't have had it more than a week before it was not fit to be seen, all stained in front, and over yellow marks, like a baking dish. I'm sure that, before a month was over his head, the knees of his trousers, and the sleeves of his jacket, right up to the elbows, were as black and shiny with grease as if they had been black-leaded. Over and over again have I said to him, "Really, Wittals, it is enough to break the heart of a saint to see the state your clothes are in! where you can think liveries come from I can't tell." And though I was continually making him take the grease spots out with turpentine, still it was only taking a great deal of trouble and turpentine for nothing: for the next day he would be in the same state again, and I should have the urchin going about the house smelling for all the world as if he had been newly painted.

As for the antics of that young Wittals, too, I declare they were enough to worry any peaceably disposed woman into Bedlam. Not a thing could he do like a rational creature; but I declare the young Turk was frisking about the house like a parched pea in a pan, and running in and out like a dog at a fair. If he had to go up stairs for anything, instead of walking down again like a Christian, he must needs get astride the mahogany banisters, and slide down like a monkey. Then again, if I sent him out ever such a little way, he would be sure to be gone ten times as long as he need be; for of course he would either be looking into all the picture-shops, or go flattening his nose against some pastry-cook's window, eyeing the ladies and gentlemen feasting inside—or else waiting to see some cab-horse get up—or walk miles in the opposite direction to which I had sent him, following some trumpery Punch and Judy, or tumblers—or either stop for hours playing at some game with buttons, or pulling up stones and things with that nasty bit of wet leather tied to the end of a string, which he always kept in his pocket. And when I was wondering what on earth could have become of him, and jumping up and running to the window every second minute to see whether there were any signs of the young vagabond, lo and behold I should see him come galloping along, either flying over every post on his way, or else rattling the street-door key along the rails of every house he passed; or if the turncock had only pulled the flag up in the middle of the road, and

turned the water on, there I should be sure to catch sight of him, with his foot right on the hole, squirting the water out on each side of the street, drenching all the little boys that were near, and destroying my bluchers, as I'm a living woman.

When he was in the house, too, he was just as trying to one's patience—not one minute's peace would the noisy young scamp ever let me have. If he wasn't playing "Happy Land" on the Jew's-harp, he would be sure to be trying that frightful "Nix my Dolly Pals," or "Happy Land," on his hair-comb. No matter what I gave him to do—I declare he couldn't keep at it for more than two minutes together, but off he 'd be as if he had got nothing but quicksilver in his veins. Now, of a morning, he had got a trumpery dozen of knives to clean, but, bless you! even they were too much for him to do right off; for, positively, as soon as he had cleaned one of them, he 'd throw himself on his hands, and putting his legs straight up in the air, he 'd sing one verse of "Such a getting up stairs" on his head, all the while beating time with the soles of his feet—and then down he 'd come again, do another knife, and then either be off to the back kitchen window, where he would stand making himself as knock-knee'd as a frog, and, turning his toes in and his elbows out, make the most horrible faces to Betsy through the window, shouting out to her, "Here we are," just like the stupid clowns in the pantomime,—or else, all of a sudden, creep into the house, and, going up behind her back, give *such* a whistle through his fingers right into her ear, as would make the whole house ring again, and set one 's teeth on edge as bad as slate pencil slid along a slate, frightening that nervous Betsy out of her life, and making her drop whatever she might have in her hand; while if one of those bothering organs only stopped opposite the window, he 'd throw down his work, however much I might want it done, and rushing into the area, pull out of his pocket the bits of broken plate he always kept there, and putting them between his fingers, keep rattling away, two in each hand, accompanying the music, till he heard me coming down after him, and then, of course, he 'd rush back again, and pretend to be working as hard as he could,—though I knew very well that directly my back was turned, the young Jackanapes would be putting his fingers to his nose, and making grimaces at me. Indeed, I can assure the courteous reader that his antics were such, and he paid so little respect to me, when he fancied I couldn't see him, that upon my word I was positively afraid to go out walking with him behind me (which was one of the things in particular I had him for), for I felt convinced that I should have him either coming after me walking on his hands, or else throwing himself head over heels sideways along the pavement, or, may be, running up and squaring away close at my back. As for the little scamp's giving one a stylish appearance, as I had been silly enough to fancy he would, in answering the door, bless you! quite the contrary—for it was ten chances to one if the young monkey didn't rush up either with a wooden sword thrust through his breeches pocket, and a brown paper cocked hat stuck on his head, or even, perhaps, with his face blacked all over with burnt cork, and covered with large bits of the red wafers I had for the black-beetles; while if, to give one an air above the common, I made him carry the prayer-books for me to church, I should be certain either to hear half-a-dozen of the young monkey's marbles roll all down the aisle in the very middle of the sermon, or else, if I took the precaution of making him empty his pockets before he went there, as sure as sure could be, he would go fast asleep, and snore as I well knew *he* alone could snore, and until I fancied every eye in the church was fixed upon me.

Positively it was as much as one person could do to keep that shocking scapegrace of a Wittals from going about in actual rags; and the whole of my mornings used to be entirely taken up in repairing his dress livery. Either I should have to try to fine-draw the knees of his trousers, for the twentieth time — till they looked like the heels of a pair of old stockings—or there 'd be a piece as big as the palm of your hand torn out at the foot where the strap buttons had been—or one of the pocket-holes slit nearly down to his knees — or else the jacket would have one of the cuffs half off — or one of the sleeves almost out — while as for those beautiful three rows of sugar-loaf buttons, I declare almost every other one was missing before the week was out, and even they were sure to be with all the

silver rubbed off of them, and as coppery looking as the plated ornaments on the harness of a hackney coach horse.

I never knew such a boy to wait at dinner. In the parlour, of course, he was on his best behaviour, because he knew Mr. Sk—n—st—n was there, (a deceitful young imp!); but only let him have to fetch up any dishes from the kitchen, and there I knew he 'd be, as plainly as if I saw him, dipping his fingers in them, and sucking them again all the way up stairs. If by any chance I had an open-work jam tart, bless you, to table it would come with all the marks of the tips of his fingers in the jam, till it looked exactly like the japanned tin boxes in a lawyer's office; or if it was a pie, there it would be, picked all round the edges, as if rats had been gnawing it; and no matter how much pounded lump sugar I had given out to sprinkle over the crust, when it came up there wouldn't be so much as a grain on the top of it. Indeed, I never came near such a boy for sugar as that was; lump after lump would he steal out of my poor dear little canary's cage as fast as I put it in; and once I recollect when my beautiful Kate had the red-gum so bad, and I packed Wittals off for our medical adviser, telling him to make all the haste he could or our doctor would have left to make his morning visits, the young monkey was gone better than an hour, though the house is only a stone's throw from ours. This made me so wild, that directly I heard his sneaking ring at the bell, I rushed to the door and seized hold of him by both arms to give him a good shaking, when, bless me, if he wasn't as sticky all over as a lollypop, and when I examined him a little more, I declare his clothes were all over molasses and brown sugar from head to foot; and then it turned out that my young Turk had been making one of a party of urchins inside an empty sugar-cask, and that in my *dress livery*, too. His knees and his back were literally caked all over with the nasty brown gluey stuff, and he had got it all sticking round his mouth, and cheeks, and chin, till his face looked like so much sand-paper.

Further than this, I do think he was the cruelest boy that could be met with anywhere. Not only was he always amusing himself with poking bits of stick through the wires of my little canary's cage, and fluttering it, until it had no more feathers on its body than a gosling, but he led our dog Carlo such a life that I really expected he 'd drive him mad before he 'd done with him. Either he 'd be throwing the cat right on top of his back, or else he 'd turn his ears inside out and tie them over his head; or else he 'd harness him, out in the garden, to the beautiful little carriage I had bought for Kitty, and then clapping his hands and hooting, so as to frighten the poor thing, it would start off at such a rate that it would nearly break the chaise all to pieces against the wall. And if he could only smuggle the poor dumb creature out of the house with him when I sent him an errand, off he 'd be to that muddy Regent's Canal, and amuse himself by throwing the wretched animal right off the bridge into the water, and presently I should see it running home with all the mud that it had been rolling itself in on the way clinging to his beautiful curly coat, for all the world as if he had been covered over with fuller's earth. Nothing would please him, too, but he must go keeping white mice in the knife-house, making the place smell as ratty as a house in chancery; and this wasn't enough, but the hard-hearted young savage must let all the wretched animals die of starvation, and wouldn't even take the trouble to give the poor things their food for more than a week after he had got them.

What I disliked most in the chit was his wicked deceit; for before Edward he was so meek and gentle that you would not have fancied that he could have said "Boh!" to a goose, and of course his master hadn't got wit enough to see through the young Turk, but must be telling me, whenever I ventured to let fall a hint as to any of his tricks directly Edward was out of the house, that he never saw a better behaved lad in all his life, saying that I could not expect to have the head of a grey beard on the shoulders of a hobbledehoy. And positively Mr. Sk—n—st—n was so taken with the artful, double-faced little brat that he must be continually giving him a penny now, and twopence then, as much as to say that he didn't believe a word of what I had told him, and was trying to see how much he could encourage the imp in his goings on. Instead of putting all these halfpence in a money-box and saving it for his old age, the disgraceful young spendthrift put it in his money-box and only saved it to buy a trumpery little wooden

theatre, and got that romantic Betsy to lend him some more to buy the whole of the scenes and characters of "THE MILLER AND HIS MEN," so that he might act it on the kitchen dresser, while she sat in front, wasting her valuable time, as the audience. Often and often, when Edward's been detained at chambers and I've been sitting alone by myself of a night waiting for him to come home, have I been almost knocked off my seat and frightened out of my wits, by hearing a report of firearms down in the kitchen, and, wondering what on earth could have happened, have rushed down stairs and found that it was only Master Wittals firing off his trumpery penny cannon, to make Miss Betsy believe that the Mill was blown up. And there I should find her clapping her hands, as the little pocket-handkerchief of a curtain came down in front of the grand transparency in the last scene, which the young monkey had got up without any regard to expense, as they say, by greasing it all over with my butter.

When I came to turn it over in my mind, it seemed as if Fate did not think it sufficient to scourge me with that dreadful novel-reading plague of a Betsy, but must also go sending a still greater plague to me, in the shape of Wittals, to drive me fairly out of my wits. Though, now that I come to think of it, I can hardly say there was a pin to choose between them; for there were six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, and both far too many for me. I'm sure of an evening, sometimes, I've nearly gone mad with the sound of that boy's drawling voice, reading some highly-exciting romance, for all the world as if he were a parish clerk going over the two first lines of a psalm. There I could hear him droning away for hours, with his

"Li—ar,—return—ed—the—aughty—Hearl—of—H—e—i—Hi—d—e—l—del—b—e—r—g—berg—Heidelberg—in—a—tone—of—suppress—ed—hire—dare—you—her—p—a—r—par—her—par—a—her—par—a—m—o—u—r—mowr—her—par—a—mowr—speak—thus."

Upon my word, too, that stupid Betsy filled the poor boy's head, directly she heard he was a foundling, with such a lot of rubbish, about his being a "Mysterious Horphan," and making him pull up his shirt-sleeves to see if he had any strawberry mark by which his parentage might be discovered, and be acknowledged as the rightful heir to his estates, that I could have given it her well, I could; for she had the impudence to tell the poor boy that noble blood flowed in his veins, and actually went to the length of asking me, whether I ever *heerd* tell of any peer of the realm whose family name might be Wittals?

But what disgusted me with the woman more than anything else, was, that she was so fond of the mischievous young imp, that in order to screen him she would stand for hours, and tell me tarradiddles as long as my arm, and which really used to make my blood all run cold to listen to. And even if I had seen the young monkey break one of my windows through his nasty cruel love of throwing stones at the poor sparrows, as he always was, she'd even then have the face to stand me out that she did it, though I always took good care to punish her well for it, by stopping it out of her wages—which, considering Wittals had none to stop it out of, I wasn't at all sorry at being obliged by her obstinacy to do.

Owing to that monkey of a Wittals going making a pig of himself inside the sugar cask, my doctor never came round till near upon five o'clock to see my poor little patient angel of a Kitty, who was suffering *so* dreadfully with her tiresome teeth; and the consequence was, that my little cherub was so much worse, and in such a burning high fever, that I declare she lay almost powerless in my arms, not stirring a limb, with the lids half down over her eyes, as if she were stupified with pain in her head. I never was so much alarmed in all my life, and I kept bathing her temples with vinegar, and crying over her, expecting that every minute she would be going into convulsions, and that I should be having the cherub snatched from me.

When the doctor came, he lanced her gums and ordered her to be put in a warm bath directly, and to have three leeches put upon each temple. Betsy put the leeches on, for it made my flesh creep to see, let alone to handle, the dirty slimy things, like the fingers of wet black kid gloves; and, besides, I knew I should faint dead off directly I saw my poppit's vital stream trickling down her little cheeks. When the dirty things were taken off my pet, that stupid Betsy came down to me to know if I should like them kept. "Kept!" I cried; "Bless

the woman, no; go and throw them over the garden, and let the fowls at the Simmondses have them, for Heaven's sake." Of course what must she do but take them down stairs first, just to let that young monkey of a Wittals catch sight of them, and no sooner did he set eyes upon them, than he went to work and wheedled my lady into letting him have the filthy things to keep in one of my old pickle bottles in his bedroom—though from all I had said to her about the crawling creatures, she very well knew that I wouldn't have them in the house for all that anybody could give me; for I can't say how it is, but I really had a presentiment at the time that if they were not destroyed, something awful would happen. Nor was I wrong, and all through that wicked, story-telling, perverse Betsy, and that good-for-nothing, careless, menagerie-keeping young imp of a Wittals—though, for the matter of that, he wasn't half so much to blame as she was.

My beautiful poor little lamb of a Kate, though much better, was still so ill that I didn't like to let her sleep with nurse; so I told Sarah to put her in our bed. But the little dove was so restless all night that I couldn't get a wink of sleep, and had to be either sitting up in the bed trying to rock her off to sleep, or else taking it in turns with Edward to pace the room with her in my arms, and merely a shawl over my shoulders. The consequence of this was, that the cold and cough which had been hanging about me ever since I was wet through, were not at all improved the next day. So in the morning, when Mr. Jupp, our medical adviser, called to see my little trot, I asked him if he would be good enough to send me round another box of the very nice cough lozenges which he had in his shop, and which had already done me a world of good.

"Feed a cold and starve a fever," says the old adage, and so I will, said I; but as I didn't see the fun of leaving it to Miss Betsy to choose the very food that I was going to put into my mouth, I thought, that since it was a nice fine warm day, if I wrapt myself up as close as I could, and put my thick boots on with my cork socks in them, it couldn't possibly do me any harm just toddling round to our butcher's, to see what he had in his shop to tempt me. When I got there, I found to my great delight that he had got two of as lovely-looking little lambs' sweetbreads as it was ever my good fortune to see; and I was just going to tell him to send them home when, as luck would have it, I turned round and caught sight of a most beautiful picture of a round of beef, all streaked with red and white like a barber's pole; and when I thought how deliciously it would eat stewed, with plenty of vegetables chopped up, and a rich thick brown gravy—into which a glass of port wine had been poured—I was torn to pieces between the two; and went and looked first at the sweetbreads and then at the beef, for I did'nt know which I should like best, and I told the butcher's wife that I really couldn't tell what to do. At last she persuaded me to have the sweetbreads for dinner that day, and the round on the morrow, especially, as she very truly said, the beef would be all the better for keeping. So I had them both, and ordering three quarters of a pound of beef steak for Edward—which, with a batter pudding to follow, would do very well I thought for our dinner that evening—galloped back home, as pleased as Punch that I had stepped round to the butcher's myself, little dreaming of what was to be the fate of my beautiful round of beef after all.

The sweetbreads were *delicious!* though that disagreeable monster of an Edward, seeing I was ill, of course tried to spoil my dinner, by declaring that his steaks were as tough and as stringy as corduroys. But I soon silenced my gentleman, by telling him that at any rate I had got a dinner for him on the morrow which was fit for the Emperor of China himself to sit down to; though I had a good bit of fun by not telling him *what* it was; and keeping on tantalizing him till I made him guess almost all through the cookery book, for, not being overfond of stewed beef, of course he never dreamt it was that.

Next morning, I went down into the kitchen, at my usual hour, to see about our dinner. To make sure that Miss Betsy had not been treating herself and *that* Wittals to a hot supper off my round of beef, as I knew, from the savoury smell there used to be down stairs very often of a night, she was in the habit of doing, though I had never been lucky enough to catch her in the fact, I just stepped into the larder to see that a slice hadn't been taken off. At the first glance I caught of the round, I thought it had a very strange look about it, for it seemed to have lost the beautiful rich colour it had. So as our larder was rather dark, I

told Betsy to carry it into the kitchen, and put it on the dresser. When I saw it fairly in the light, oh dear! oh dear! if it wasn't as white as parchment! "What on earth *have* you been doing to this meat, you good-for-nothing woman, you?" I exclaimed, drawing it close to me; "and what, in the name of all that 's horrid, are these black things?" I continued, just going to take hold of one of them, when I saw it move, and then, goodness gracious, the truth burst upon me! "Oh, you shameful, disobedient minx, if these are not the very leeches that I told you to throw into Mr. Simmonds's garden." And when I came to look well into the bleached round of beef, positively there were as many as four of the horrid, slimy vampires, who, having sucked the thing quite white, and till they were nearly as big as small black puddings, were now hanging down the sides, for all the world like the tails on my imitation ermine tippet. "Where have you put the other two?" I exclaimed, in a most tremendous passion; "tell me this minute, or I 'll have you up before a magistrate, for wilfully destroying my property, I will." This put my lady in such a fright that she wasn't long in pointing them out to me on the wash-hand-stand in Wittals's room; and it was lucky I found them as soon as I did, for their noses were just over the rim of the bottle, and if I 'd been a minute later, I should have had them crawling about the house, and fastening upon the legs of goodness knows who.

I caught hold of the bottle, and poking the things back into the water with the end of the young urchin's hair brush, I rushed with the whole concern down to the end of the garden, and threw the voracious little black monsters, bottle and all, right into the Simmonds's garden — though, as it afterwards turned out, it would have been much better if I had left them where I had found them—for no sooner did that young monkey of a Wittals miss his darling leeches, and learn from Miss Betsy what had become of them, than he must needs go clambering over the wall, and, not content with bringing them back into the house again, must go putting them into one of my empty lozenge boxes, and leaving it on the dresser with the horrid things inside of it, while he went to get another bottle to keep them in, as I afterwards found out, to my cost.

However, to come back to myself. Directly I returned to the kitchen, after having thrown the black brutes over the wall, I turned round to Miss Betsy, and said, "Throw that meat away, you perverse, forward, self-willed minx; I won't have such meat cooked in *my* house, and if I don't make you pay for another piece for me out of your next quarter, I hope I may never know the taste of a round of beef again—that 's all."

Scarcely could I have been up stairs more than a quarter of an hour, than it struck me, that not only would it be a sad pity to waste such a beautiful piece of meat as that was when I saw it in the butcher's-shop, but I had already threatened to stop so many things out of Miss Betsy's next quarter, that I felt convinced she could never pay for half of them. So off I trotted down stairs again, and told Betsy that, as a punishment, she and Wittals should have nothing else for their dinners but that very round of beef, until it was all gone. Just as I was going up stairs again, I happened to cast my eye on the dresser, and what should I see but a lozenge box; so, of course, fancying I must have left it there when I was down before, I took it up, and, putting it in my pocket, returned to the parlour, little thinking that it was the very one into which young Wittals had, not five minutes before, put his two beastly pet leeches.

Upon my word, the chill I had taken had settled into such a dreadful cold in the head, that really when I sat down to my work again in the parlour, I couldn't do a stitch of work for it; and though, thanks to Mr. Jupp's lozenges, my cough was much better, still my poor head was so bad, that I couldn't let my handkerchief remain quiet in my pocket for two moments together:—and just after Betsy had taken the milk in for tea, I was seized with a violent fit of sneezing, and I had no sooner put my pocket handkerchief to my nose than I felt a sharp twinge at the end of it, just as if some one was driving a needle right in between my nostrils. When I snatched my handkerchief away, I was as certain as possible that there was something heavy hanging at the end of it, for I could not only feel it, but when I squinted down, I could see some dark coloured thing dangling backwards and forwards; I rushed to the mirror, to learn what on earth it could be—when, augh! if there wasn't a long black beast of a large leech sticking quite

fast to my nasal organ, just like the drop to a jet ear-ring. I gave a loud scream, and put up my handkerchief to take hold of the reptile, when, oh, la! if another of the dirty brutes didn't roll right out of it on to the rug.

No sooner did my poor dear Carlo, who was lying before the fire, see something fall, than up he jumped, and began sniffing away at it, and turning it over and over with his nose, until I declare if the reptile didn't fasten right upon it; and there he was scampering about the room, with one of the brutes dangling to *his* nasal organ as well, tossing his head about, and growling away all the time like a mad thing; as for pulling the one at the end of *mine* off, positively it was a waste of time to try; for really and truly the creature clung as fast as a barnacle, and besides being as slippery as an eel, was as elastic as Indian rubber. Off I flew to the bell, and pulled it hard enough to have pulled it down, all the time shaking my head away, in the hopes that I should be able to jerk the creature off, before that snail of a Betsy came with the salt—which, however, was the only means of getting rid of it—and which I 'm sure she was ten minutes, if she was a second, in bringing to me.

As soon as the leech was off, I turned round upon Miss Betsy, and showing her the little star that the long black ogre had made at the end of my nose, (which really was as white as a parsnip too,) I told her to look *there*, and see how her wickedness had marked me to my dying day, (and sure enough I 've got the scar now,) and then ask herself if she thought it was likely that I was going to keep her in my establishment another moment after such treatment as that. However, there was one thing that I could tell her, and that was, that I wasn't—so I very civilly told her to go and pack up her trumpery things and rubbishing romances, and be out of the house before half-an-hour was over her head; and so, thank goodness gracious, the stupid, sentimental, novel-reading, leech-preserving hussy was.

As for that Master Wittals, I told Edward that either he or I must leave the house. And as I knew Mr. Sk—n—st—n wanted a sharp active lad in his office, and Wittals was sharp and active enough, Heaven knows, why, I made Edward take him down to Lincoln's Inn, the very following morning, where he could try and see if he could manage the wild young colt.

Now, thank goodness, it is Miss Sarah's turn!

Though I had her in the house while Betsy and Wittals were there, still, as I kept her closely locked up in the nursery, of course I thought there was no fear of her being spoilt by the other two. But, bless you, she didn't want any *spoiling*, for I do think I never came near such an artful, deceitful, prudish, straight-laced vixen as that girl was. At first I thought she was a pattern of virtue and affection, and that she loved children as much as she led me to believe she hated the men. My little Kate was nothing more nor less than "an angel dropped down from the skies, it was"—according to her; and it was always, "such a shame not to let it have what it wanted, a dear,"—with her double-faced "bless its dear little heart!" and "love its sweet little eyes!" to my face; and then, how she would beat it, and pinch it, and shake it, behind my back—oh my! She would never marry, she wouldn't, oh no! the men were such selfish things, to her thinking, that she couldn't bear the sight of them—not she; and all the while she would be lolling, nearly the whole of the day, half way out of the window, ogling and grinning at every whipper-snapper of a fellow that came within leer of the place. But if I had thought for a moment, I might have known that it would be the case. Any one would have fancied, I dare say, that I was sick and tired of pretty maids, after the way in which Miss Susan went on. But what was I to do? Either I must have my little cherub catching the expression of some common-looking servant girl, or else, if I had a decent-looking maid, with a pleasant face of her own for the little chick to look at, then I must be plagued to death by a pack of idle vagabonds of young men, always dancing at her heels wherever she went, and the girl looking after them instead of my little lamb. Then I used to send her out, like a stupid, into the Regent's Park, for what I fancied was an airing for the child. Pretty airing, indeed! But more of this hereafter.

Well, one day, just after the new cook came in, I had packed off Miss Innocence with my darling poppit, in her little carriage, for a nice hour's ride in the

park. And as I watched little Kate down the street, I thought she did look *so* nice with her beautiful white feather coming over her straw hat, and her neat little green silk pelisse, which I had made on purpose for the little darling out of my old scarf,—and when I saw Sarah making the little dear shake its little, fat, tiny hand to me across the road, I couldn't help saying to myself, "Well, I 'm glad the girl 's fond of it, as I do think I should have fretted my life out, if I fancied that a servant of mine ill-treated or neglected any of my little ones."

Kitty's little dinner had been ready more than half-an-hour, and yet there were no signs of Sarah's return with the pet, so I felt sure that either she had mistaken the time, or else—as it was a very fine day—had gone for a little longer walk than usual; and then, as I thought a mouthful of fresh air wouldn't hurt me, and it was such charming weather, I ran up stairs and slipt on my bonnet and scarf, and determined on going and meeting them as they came home. "Ah!" I said to myself, while I was putting on my things, "now if that child had been out with any other person than a steady girl like Sarah, I should have been very much alarmed. And isn't it much cheaper, now, to give a pound or two extra wages, and feel assured that wherever your child might go, and however long she might be away from you, she is, at least, out of harm's way, and couldn't be in better hands even if she were at home."

So off I went, consoling myself in this way, and thinking what a dinner the little poppit would make after being out in the air so long. As I knew Sarah in general promenaded up and down the broad walk, because, in the first place, there were no horses and carriages there; and, secondly, the keepers always take care to protect a poor lone woman from insult, as she said; as I knew that I should be sure to find her there, I made the best of my way towards that quarter. Just as I had got about half way down, I thought I saw some one very like her coming up the path towards me; but when I looked again, I was satisfied it couldn't be Sarah, for there was a young man with her, who was continually poking his head under her bonnet, and looking up in her face. And yet, when the young woman came nearer, I knew it was my maid, by the carriage and my little Kitty's bonnet and feather. I felt convinced that the poor girl was making the best of her way towards the keeper, to avoid the young man's persecutions, and I stood still, expecting every minute to see her give the monkey in charge. But when I beheld my lady march right past the man in the green livery, and, indeed, with her head turned the other way, I couldn't help saying to myself—"Well, now, there 's deceit for you! Oh! you hate the men, do you?" And scarcely had I said it, when a great Newfoundland dog came tearing behind the carriage, and turned it right over on its side; and though my little pet began screaming away, still my lady was so wrapt up in the nonsense the fellow was stuffing into her head, that, bless you! she no more heard the screams of my darling than she seemed to be aware the carriage was upset; for on she went, flirting away, casting die-away looks at the fellow, and tapping his hand with her trumpery parasol, as much as to say—"Go along with you, do, you naughty, naughty man," while she kept dragging the carriage after her, flat on its side, as it was, and my little beauty, all along the gravel, as if it had been a garden-roller. Directly I saw the chaise upset, I ran towards the minx as fast as my legs would carry me; but even then I couldn't reach her in time enough to save my pretty cherub; and when I got up to it—oh, dear me! if its sweet little face wasn't scored all over like crackling, and the gravel sticking into her cheeks for all the world like a bit of asphalte pavement.

I could have looked over this misfortune, (although, if the courteous reader will believe me, my little Kate has got some of the grits in her cheeks to this very day, and you can feel the gravel under the skin, like the stones in currants,) but it was the woman's wicked deceit, in making me believe that she hated the very sight of a man, that set me against her. But I put a stop to those walks in the Park pretty soon. No wonder she was so anxious to take the child out to do it good—a toad!

What made me not like to part with her, however, was, that she seemed so head over ears in love with my little beauty, that I felt quite an interest in the woman, and was stupid enough to believe, that if I could only keep her away from that bothering Regent's Park, and the lawyers clerks out of place that are

always lolloping about on the seats there, she would go on very well. Still, notwithstanding all the affection she made such a show of towards my little life, Edward and I used to remark that the child was always crying when it was up in the nursery; and when we asked her what was the reason of it all, leave her alone for having some taradiddle always ready at the tip of her tongue, by way of answer. Oh! then it was either the little love was fretting after its dear mamma, or else its poor teeth were wherreting its poor soul out, and the little Goody Two Shoes was ready to tear its little mouth to pieces, it was! (Was there ever such a double-faced crocodile?) But the mystery was soon cleared up; for one fine morning, a nice old silver-haired gentleman knocked at the door a few minutes after my lady had come in with my pet from its airing, (which had done it *so* much good, that it had got *such* an appetite for its little dinner, I couldn't tell!) and, like a good old soul, said he had called to tell me that he had seen that Miss Sarah of mine (who was *so* fond of my Kate that she could eat her!) ill-treating the poor little dear so shamefully in the open streets, that he couldn't help following her home, and informing me of it. Directly the dear old gentleman had gone, I had my little cherub down, and stripping it, lo! and behold, if the little dear's white skin wasn't dappled all over black and blue, with the pinches *that* deceitful, hard-hearted nurse of mine had given it, till positively it had more the appearance of a little iron grey pony than a human being! Oh! how my fingers *did* itch to be about the creature!

So I got rid of that deceitful bit of goods very soon, I can assure you; and so, indeed, I did of a number of others after her; for, upon my word, they are all alike, whether they are cooks, or housemaids, or nurserymaids, or pages, or footmen, it's the same story over and over again—worry, worry—bother, bother—from morning till night, and not a moment's peace to be had for love or money. A maid-of-all-work was quite a match for me; but, when we got on in the world, so as to be able to afford a footman—Lord bless me! I was positively mad from the moment I got up to the moment I went to bed again. Now, there was that lazy, impudent, fat footman of a Duffy. I'm sure he was—but my courteous readers must excuse me entering into particulars at present. They will be able to judge of the character my gentleman was from Mr. Cruikshank's admirable plate. But it wasn't only the laziness and cool impudence of the fat pig that pleased me, but he had a horrid way of—but I'm sorry to say I must reserve it all for another chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH PRINCIPALLY CONSISTS OF A QUIET HALF HOUR'S TALK ABOUT THE VIRTUES AND AIRS OF THAT GREAT, BIG, FAT, OVERFED, JOHN DUFFY OF MINE, WHO WAS THE FIRST FOOTMAN I HAD IN MY SERVICE, AND WHO COULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN THE HOUSE MORE THAN A WEEK, I'M SURE, BEFORE (LUD-A-MERCY ME!) IF I DIDN'T DRAT THE DAY WHEN I FIRST SET EYES ON HIM; FOR I DECLARE THE PUPPY HAD SUCH AN IMPUDENT LOOK WITH HIM, THAT I NEVER SAW HIS FACE BUT I DIDN'T LONG FOR THE TIME WHEN I SHOULD SEE HIS BACK. HE *was* A PRETTY FOOTMAN TO BE SURE.

"And a very saucy one,
Heigh ho! Heigh ho!
He walk'd so stiff, and look'd so smart,
As if he own'd each maiden's heart;
I could have bang'd him, for my part.
Heigh ho! Heigh ho!"

POPULAR SONG—*though, in justice to the writer, I ought to add, that I have taken the liberty of adapting the last line of the highly talented poem to my highly excited feelings; for, as John Duffy never had any* "KEEN DART" *of* "HIS OWN," *of course I couldn't go* "WISHING" *with the poet, that the monkey* "FELT" *any such fiddlesticks; though I must confess, that when I've seen that man crawling up stairs, as lazily as if he were a black beetle, I have over and over again* "WISHED" *to myself I only had my great big shawl-pin handy, so that I could have made him* FEEL THAT.

OF course, when I had once risen to the dignity of having a male domestic in my establishment, I wasn't going to make such a great silly of myself, as to come down again to the wretchedness of having nothing but a pack of females about one. Accordingly, I gave "my lord and master" (as Mr. Edward flatters himself he is) to understand as much in double-quick time. A fine thing, indeed, I said, it would be, to have all one's good-natured friends, and all one's precious charitable neighbours, (who every one knows are always sure to love one as themselves —oh yes!) pointing at one, and sneering away behind one's back whenever one went out, with their "Oh, dear me! only to think that the *poor* Sk—n—st—ns couldn't afford to keep on that grand page they started, for more than *one* quarter of a year;" and with their nasty, double-faced "pity from the bottom of their hearts, because they were *afraid* we had been all along living beyond our means."

But Mr. Edward was too great a philosopher by half to care a snap of the fingers for the opinion of the empty world or the feelings of his poor dear wife, of course—especially when it would cost him a trumpery five-and-twenty pounds, and a suit or two of livery, per annum. Consequently, when I told him one evening, after I had treated him to a nice sweet little dinner of a leg of mutton, stuffed with sage and onions—pork-fashion—and a love of a bread-pudding to follow—(I always make it a rule to use up all the bits of bread in the house, at least once a week—unless indeed we have any illness in the family, and they are wanted for poultices—for, as I believe I said before somewhere, I can't bear to see waste,) —Well, when I told Mr. Edward, I repeat, after we had both I'm sure eaten more than was good for us—(only I do think sage and onions *so* delicious when one is not going to see company, and one can only get one's husband just to take a mouthful or so of it; and then, 'pon my word, I verily believe, I could devour my own dear mother, if she was only stuffed with plenty of it, and nicely browned) —Well, when I told Mr. Edward—I repeat for the second time—just after we had finished every bit of that love of a bread-pudding (though the worst of it was, I, unfortunately, would go putting too much bread in it, like a great big generous stupid as I am, and, bother take it! the spongy stuff does swell so in the cooking, and then is sure to set to work and soak up all your custard in such a way, that 'pon my word and honour, when the love came to table, if it wasn't like so much sop, and, positively, I'd have bet any one anything there wasn't enough custard left in the whole dish to fill a sixpenny "Circassian Cream" pot—and that's small enough, goodness knows! so that really and truly it looked so uninviting when I came to help it, that it was hardly fit to give to one's parrot, or even to let the servants have, by way of a treat.)—But to return: well, when I told Mr. Edward—I repeat for the third time—(for plague take that dinner, I *cannot* get it

out of my head) — that I had been considering for a long time whether it would be prudent in us to think about having another of those impudent young monkeys of pages in our house, when, for the matter of a few rubbishing pounds extra a year, we could get a nice, steady, handsome, respectable-looking man-servant, whose livery, I was sure, wouldn't come, in the long run, to one penny more, if so much as that disgraceful young scape-grace of a Wittals did — for there 'd be no silver sugar-loaf buttons continually to find, and they, with those bothering boys in livery, cost a small fortune alone, I knew.

Besides, I said—just to put Edward in a good temper—a man of *his* naturally strong judgment must be well aware that a great big strapping boy, who hadn't done growing, and kept running up so fast that he required to have at least two tucks let out of his trowsers every quarter, must eat more than a decent, well-behaved, abstemious young man who had got to his proper size, and who consequently wouldn't be always getting a head taller per annum out of your mutton and beef. And, moreover, I added, going to the sofa and kissing him, as I saw him smile, with what at the time I foolishly supposed to be good humour — "It will, you know, my dear, look so highly genteel, and give one such a standing in the world, to have one's door opened by a fine good-looking fellow, with powdered hair and a pair of handsome legs, and near upon six feet in his shoes." But, oh dear bless me, no! Mr. Edward wouldn't listen to such *stuff*, as he called it; and must needs go bursting into a contemptuous laugh, telling me to go along with me, for I was an old fool, and ought to have more sense in my head at my time of life, (*my* time of life, indeed! Well, that is good! Isn't it, gentle reader?)

Of course it was the old story over and over again. He wasn't going to bring himself to the workhouse, he wasn't, for any of my fine fal-lal notions. As for his having a great, fat, lazy footman, sauntering about his house, and eating the very bed from under him, he wouldn't think of it for a moment; for the long and short of it was, *he couldn't afford it*, especially with the few suits that he had then down on his 'Chancery Cause Book;' and the world seemed to have come to such a pass now-a-days, that relations and partners *would* settle all their disputes amicably. So I merely told him, that, of course, I couldn't say whether his trumpery Chancery Cause Book would allow him to afford me a footman or not; but this I *could* and I *would* say, that unless something was done, he 'd have to afford, somehow or other, to pay for my funeral expenses before long — though, perhaps, I added, with my usual biting sarcasm, *that* would be far more agreeable to him. Then, bursting into tears, I went on saying, "If some change does not take place, I can only tell you, sir, I shall fall a martyr to your meanness and this great big house; for I feel myself sinking every day under the weight of it; and Doctor J—pp himself has, over and over again, said, when he has called and found me here nearly fainting with fatigue, 'Why, my dear madam, will we over-exert ourselves in this way? Really, we are too attentive and good a housewife. We are not fit for it—positively, we are not. Now, we ought to be in bed in our present state — indeed, we ought — instead of being up here, ruining our naturally fine constitution in this way. Mr. Sk—n—st—n, I am sure, cannot be aware of what we are doing, or he would never allow us, if he had one spark of feeling, to be killing ourselves by inches in this way. Really, my dear, good lady it comes to this — either we must get extra help, and eat little and good, and often, or depend upon it, we shall be in our graves before many months are over our heads. Would you like us to speak to our good worthy husband on the subject, for I am sure he would gladly make any sacrifice, rather than let us endanger our precious life thus?" And what reply did I make to my medical attendant? I asked Edward, with an indignant look—why, I merely said, "No, Dr. J—pp, my own dear Edward will tell you that he cannot afford it; and if so, perhaps my funeral expenses will fall less heavily upon him than having an extra servant in the house."

After I had said this, I sank in a chair, and burying my face in a sweet pretty cambric handkerchief, with a very rich imitation Valenciennes border, I waited, sobbing, as if my heart would break, to see whether he would let me have my footman or not; and expecting, of course, that every minute he would be coming up and kissing me, and telling me that he would gladly do anything I liked to make his own sweet angel of a Carry happy and comfortable.

But, drat the cold-hearted, ill-natured hyena, he only burst out giggling in a

most insulting way, and said, in his nasty, unmeaning slang, "it wouldn't *do*, and that he wasn't quite such a fool as I seemed to take him for." So I jumped up in a jiffey, and said with great point, and looking penknives at him, "I see what it is, sir; the sage and onions have disagreed with you, and of course you're disgusted with the whole world, and your poor dear wife must suffer for it,"—and then, banging the door to with all my might, I walked quietly up to our bed-room, determined to read my lord duke a strong lesson, and just let him see that I wasn't a worm.

"That footman I'll have, if I die for it," I exclaimed, as I jumped into bed, and turned my back round to the side Mr. Sk—n—st—n usually sleeps upon.

Next day I caught my gentleman out so nicely, the reader don't know; and I led him such a dance the reader can't tell. Well, the fact is, I didn't feel quite myself, so I thought I might as well, as it was a very fine morning, pop on my beautiful white lace bonnet, and my sweet imitation Shetland shawl, (they had only just come in then, though drat it! they have got as vulgar as vulgar can be lately, and what I'm to do with mine I really don't know, for, like a ninny, I thought it too good to wear every day, at first; however, as I wouldn't be seen in it now for the whole world, perhaps I'd better make a great favour of it, and give it to my own dear mother.)—Well, as I was saying, I strolled very comfortably down to Regent-street, just to take a passing glance at some of the lovely new dresses in the shops, that I should like to buy if I could only afford the money; and as it was, I was as near as two pins going in and getting two or three of the most expensive, and sending the bill in to Mr. Edward, just as a lesson to him for the future — but the worst of it is, I've always been too considerate for him by half, and he is *so* violent at times. So I went strolling on until, I declare, if I wasn't right at the bottom of Waterloo-place before I knew where I was, and felt myself so warm and faint for want of something, that I said to myself, I may as well, now I'm here, just step on to Farrance's, and treat myself to a lemon ice or so out of the housekeeping; for, as I very truly observed, it would be a hard matter if I couldn't get a trifle like *that* out of the weekly expenses at home; and besides Mr. Edward need be none the wiser, for nothing was easier than to put it down in the book under the head of "*Charities;*" and really, when I came to think of it, I positively blushed to remember that for weeks and weeks past I hadn't put down so much as a farthing for that noblest of all the nine virtues.

Well, when I got to Farrance's, who should the first person that I clapt eyes upon be, but my Mr. Edward himself, seated like a prince at one of the little marble tables, with two large sixpenny oyster patties before him, gormandizing away like a pig, as he is. So I crept up to him, and, *pretending I had seen him through the window*, I said, in a low voice, "So you are going to the workhouse, are you, my fine gentleman? Pretty workhouse, indeed! I never saw such a workhouse. And you can't afford to have a footman to eat the very bed from under you, can't you? Of course you can't, if you come here every day, as now I plainly see you do, stuffing yourself with oyster patties, and such like indigestible extravagances, when I'm sure a round or two of cold toast, nicely done up in an old newspaper, would do very well for your luncheon, sir, and then there would be no occasion for your poor, dear, overworked wife to go slaving her life out to save you the expense of another servant, as you know she does. Augh! I can't bear such gluttony.—Here, waitress," I exclaimed, "bring me a lemon ice and a Bath bun or two, with a few almond cakes, if you please." And then I went on, scolding him for his disgusting greediness, and eating by turns, until, I declare, when the time came for that selfish pig of an Edward to pay, and the young woman at the counter asked me what I had had, if I hadn't to tell her that I had taken two lemon waters, and three of those, (pointing to the Bath buns;) and two of those, (pointing to the raspberry puffs;) and two more of those, (pointing to the gooseberry tarts;) and, let me see—yes, I think, either three or four of those, (pointing to the almond cakes)—though, between ourselves, I was certain I had eaten at least six of the hollow delicious things, for I'm very fond of them; but, of course, all pastry cooks know very well that ladies never can, or, at least, never will tell them exactly to a paltry penny cake or two what they have had, and the people in the shop take good care to increase the price of their articles accordingly.

When that precious beauty of a Mr. Edward came home that evening, I wasn't going to be such a stupid as to let the capital discovery I had made drop in a

minute; so all dinner-time I went on apologizing that I had got none of the *oyster patties* for him, which he seemed so partial to; and asking him whether they allowed such delicacies in the *workhouse* he was going to in such a hurry, and saying a whole troop of other nice tantalizing things, until I made him so wild, that he went on in such a way, and said such unwarrantable things to me, and kept on vowing that I should *not* have the footman I wanted, in such a frightful manner, that at last bang went the door to again, and up stairs I bounced to bed, saying, "I'll soon let you see whether I'll have the footman or not, my fine Turk; for if I'm not as ill as ill can be, until I have a man-servant safe in the house, why my name's not Sk—n—st—n."

All that night through I had the spasms so bad, that I took good care Mr. Edward didn't have a wink of sleep; and next morning, just as he was shaving himself, and promising, that if I wanted an extra servant, I might have a parlour-maid (like his impudence, indeed!) I had such a violent attack of hysterics, that any one, to have heard my screams (and I'm sure they must have been audible at least a hundred villas off), would have thought that Mr. Sk—n—st—n was ill-treating me. Just before he went down stairs, I called him to the bedside, and told him I was convinced I had got violent Neuralgia, brought on by my over-exertions about the house, and most likely I should never entirely get rid of it to my dying day. "Do you feel in pain, then, my love?" he said. "Where is it? Tell me, my duck." "Of course I did," I answered; and throwing up the whites of my eyes, and biting my lip, as if in great agony, I begged him "Not to duck me, as he was the cause of it all, and that he might thank his stars that his ill-treatment hadn't so completely shattered my nerves as to have brought on St. Vitus's dance,"—and so it certainly would, only, to tell the reader the truth, I didn't know the step of that most frightful of all dances; and I recollect when my aunt Rawlings had it very severely, it seemed to me much more difficult to manage than the double-shuffle in the College Hornpipe, so that as for keeping *that* up all about the house for a whole week, why it was more than I chose to do.

As the reader may well imagine, I had our medical adviser round pretty soon, for I knew Mr. Edward hated doctors' bills, and Mr. J—pp would be sure to agree with me, it was Neuralgia, as your doctors always say it is that, when they can't exactly make out what it is that ails a lady. So when he came round, he told Edward great care must be taken of me, and I was to be kept quite quiet, and free from all annoyance, as I was suffering from as severe an attack of the nerves as he ever recollected to have met with in the whole course of his extensive practice, adding, that it wasn't to be wondered at, as it was very prevalent among the ladies of the nobility and gentry just then; and that, indeed, he was attending several persons of quality at that time for the very same thing. After this, he sent me round some very nice sweet draughts, and some of the most delicious tinctures I think I ever tasted in the whole course of my life, which used to make me feel so beautiful and "tippy" afterwards, my lady readers can't tell.

All that week I had my breakfast in bed, and what made me enjoy it more than any thing else was, I knew Mr. Edward hated to pour out his own tea, and butter his own toast of a morning, because it interfered with his newspaper. Only the worst of breakfasting in bed is, that bother take it! the crumbs will get all over the sheets, and if one happens to have dry toast, they are so hard, and do scrub a poor body so, that really one might just as well lie upon sand-paper for the comfort of the thing; and drat it, do what you will, you can't get them out of the bed again, until the things are taken off and well shaken.

When I went down stairs, after the fourth day, I laid myself upon the sofa, and was too ill to eat a thing; though Mr. Edward would come to my side, and beg and pray of me just to take a mouthful for his sake. But no! I told him, with a sigh, I was too weak to take anything beyond a cup of tea and a little dry toast (for, of course, after the couple of good large mutton chops that I took good care to have in the middle of the day, I hadn't much of an appetite left for dinner, especially as I wouldn't let my gentleman have any thing particularly nice—saying to myself, "If we can't afford a footman—I'm sure we can't afford dainties!")

And so I went on with my severe attack of Neuralgia, getting worse and worse, and making my grand Turk breakfast by himself, and dine by himself—and get out of bed at all hours of the night to give me my delicious tinctures, and never even condescending to speak to him, unless it was to tell him, with a sigh, how ill and weak I felt,—and that I knew it was all owing to my over-exertions about

the great big house,—and continually reminding him too that he had only him self to blame for it, as I had given him fair warning of what would be the consequence of his unfeeling meanness,—and then asking him quietly whether it wasn't better now to pay the money for a footman, instead of seeing his poor, dear, fond, foolish wife suffering so acutely as she was, and having to pay, at least, double or treble as much in those horrid doctor's bills for her,—and so I went on, I say, until, upon my word, one Monday evening (for I remember Mr. Edward had the boiled knuckle of veal cold for dinner which I'd given him hot on the Sunday), I was lying on the sofa groaning away, and my gentleman was seated by me after dinner, looking quite repentant, and asking me whether I thought Mr. J—pp was doing me good, and a whole troup of other civil things, when I said—with a sigh that seemed to cut him to the quick, thank goodness!—"It's too late now, Edward *dear;* I told you I was sinking fast, but you wouldn't believe it then, and now I feel satisfied that I sha'n't trouble you with my presence here much longer." "For Heaven's sake! Carry, my love, don't go on in that way!" he exclaimed, pressing my hand between his two palms. "Is there anything I can get for you, dearest?" "That footman I spoke to you about," I replied, "perhaps might have relieved me at one time; but now"—I added, as if in pain, "there is no hope. You will be kind to my little darling toodle-loodle-lumpty, when its poor dear mother's no more, and take care when the little trot grows up that *she's* not killed in this great big house for want of a footman." Here that Edward gave two or three pathetic snivels, and commenced feeling for his pocket-handkerchief. So as I saw he was beginning to melt, I continued, in a low, solemn voice, "When I am gone, promise me, Edward—you wont marry again—and you will put upon my tombstone that I was a 'TENDER AND AFFECTIONATE WIFE,' and 'UNIVERSALLY REGRETTED'—and now I come to think of it, Edward dear, it would look charming if you were to add those beautiful lines of '*Affliction sore long time I bore,*' and wind up with '*she fell a martyr to the want of a footman,*' brought in nicely somehow." This, I'm proud to say, was a severe home-thrust; and on looking at my fine gentleman, if I didn't see a beautiful little tear in the corner of each of his eyes; and thank goodness, by staring as hard as ever I could at one of the roses in the carpet, and drawing the air in up my nose, I was lucky enough to squeeze out two or three tears myself—so that at last I worked upon the hard-hearted monster's feelings in such a way, that he turned round and told me if I thought a footman would be any relief to me, for goodness sake to get one, only I was not to give way to low spirits as I did. But I merely answered, "No, thank you, dearest, dearest Edward; you must not go to any expense to please me in my last moments—*you cannot afford it.*" "Do not say so, dear Carry," he answered, "you must and shall have one!" "No, no," I replied, groaning as if in severe agony; "*you cannot afford it,* and I will not listen to it." "What!—not to please your own Edward, my lamb," he said, in a low voice, putting his lips close to my ear. "To please her own Edward," I returned, with affection, "his lamb will do anything;" and then throwing my arms round his neck, I put an end to that awkward business.

"Ha, ha! Mr. Edward, my fine gentleman," I couldn't for the life of me help exclaiming to myself, whilst I was kissing him, "I said I'd have a footman, if I died for it, and a footman I've got, and the best of it is, too, I've made a favour of accepting what I wanted—and what is so delightful to a poor dear married lady as that?"

I was getting well as quick as ever I decently could, when I was nearly thrown back; and I really thought I should be obliged to have a relapse. The fact is, we had a nasty tiff about the livery; for, upon my word, if Mr. Edward was not for putting the fellow into plain clothes—a likely thing! I said, and perhaps have him mistaken for some of my relations. But I pretty soon gave my gentleman to understand that I would have nothing short of a livery in my house; when, of course, off he went, talking some more of his highflown radical slang about liveries being "low things," and "badges of servitude." Badges of servitude, indeed! as if I did not know they were, long ago; and, to confess the truth, that was just the very reason—as I told him—why I stood out for one. Did he for one moment fancy that I was such a great big silly as to go to the expense of a man-servant to have him going in and out of my house, looking as disreputable as a country curate. For my part, I said, nothing would please me better

—if it was only the fashion—than to put a beautiful brass collar round his neck, with our name and address nicely engraved on it, so that he might go about like a Newfoundland dog, and people know whose property he was. So I begged I might hear no more of such fal-lal nonsense; and that, if he did not wish to make me ill again, he would drop the subject without saying another word about it.

Well, I suppose, if I saw one, I saw a hundred great, big, hulking fellows, who came after my situation, and who were so grand, that, bless us and save us! one would have fancied that they had been brought up as clerks in some government office, and had been in the habit of receiving large salaries for doing nothing all their lives. Out of the bunch, I picked that John Duffy—drat him!—for he was the best, to my way of thinking. When he applied for the place, he was a nice, decent, genteel-looking body, of rather a slim figure than otherwise, and he seemed *so* willing—assuring me that he was ready to make himself generally useful, (all of which I can now very well understand—especially the thinness—for he had been six months out of a situation.)

The livery I had made for that John Duffy was one of the sweetest things when it was new, certainly. Every article of the entire suit was of a different colour. I ordered the tailor to make me a love of a white coat, and a pet of a canary waistcoat, and a perfect duck of a pair of bright crimson plush knee what-d'ye-call-'ems — the name of the things escapes me just at the present moment. Mr. Edward, in his nasty, perverse way, would have it that Duffy would look more like a Macaw in such fine feathers than a Christian: but I soon put a stop to his sneers, for I asked him pretty plainly, what the dickens that was to me? Of course I wanted all the world to know that I had got a footman, and as I didn't see anything to be ashamed of in it, I took good care to publish it as conspicuously, and in as many colours, as a Vauxhall posting-bill.

But it seemed as if Fate had put me down in her black books, for really and truly that John Duffy couldn't have been in the house above a month, before he got *so* gross and *so* fat, and did make flesh *so* fast, that I'm sure it would have required nothing short of a suit of vulcanized india-rubber to have kept pace with him. As for asking him to pick up anything, bless you! I no more dared to do it than—than I don't know what; for as sure as the porpoise stooped for anything, bang! would go either the strings of his waistcoat or else crack! would fly all the beautiful silver buttons off the knees of his—a—of his thing-me-jigs. (dear me, I shall forget my own name next.) When that monkey of a Wittals was with me, he nearly drove me out of my mind by growing upwards, but that pig of a Duffy fairly sent me stark staring mad, by growing sideways—drat him! Wittals, to have looked any way decent, wanted trousers made to pull out like telescopes; but that abominable Duffy, in order to have been kept merely respectable, must have had a coat and waistcoat made to expand like an accordion. If Wittals's mulberry pantaloons required a tuck to be let out at the bottom at least once a month, I'm sure that Duffy's canary vest needed another gore to be let in at the back quite as often. Really, the sixth week after the great whale had been in my kitchen, if he hadn't grown nearly five waistcoat buttons stouter upon the good things out of my larder, and, before two months were over my head, if I hadn't to put in behind a great wedge of shalloon—in the shape of a large sippet, to get it to meet anyhow. The way in which the man's chin, too, kept on increasing was positively frightful for a thrifty housewife to behold. Chin upon chin, did I see grow under my very eyes, until at last they bulged out over his neckcloth, for all the world like half a melon. And no wonder! for the quantity that man would eat was positively as if he was going into training for an apoplexy; and it wasn't quantity alone he wanted, but, bless me! quality as well! As for cold meat, over and over again, have I seen him trying to turn his nose up at it; but, unfortunately for him, it was a snub, and do what he would, he couldn't turn it up any higher. But, though Mr. Duffy objected to cold meat for dinner, yet he could manage to make away with a pound or two of it for his breakfast and supper. And, mercy-on-me! even the common household bread wasn't good enough for his royal highness's delicate stomach! Oh, no! he must needs go pampering himself with the digestive cottages I had expressly for myself of a morning. As for good wholesome salt butter, too, at one-and-one, I declare he wouldn't so much as soil his mouth with it; not he! but he'd wait till our butter-dish came down, and then *wouldn't* he fall to at our

fresh at one-and-eight, and spread it on a large bit of my digestive cottage—yes! as thick as stucco.

The beauty of it was, too, the fatter he got upon my food, the lazier he grew over my work, for really it seemed as difficult for him to crawl along, as if he was one of those heavy inactive things your city folks *will* call "lively turtle;" and all the way up stairs one might hear him breathing as hard as a pavior, and puffing and blowing away like a railway engine. When he came up, too, there he'd be, with his face looking as greasy and dirty as the newspaper we have half price from the coffee-shop, and his forehead as dewy as our kitchen window on a washing day. But what annoyed me more than all was, that, do what I would, I could not, for the life of me, get the nasty bristly pig to shave his ugly red beard of a morning; and there I should have him bringing the dinner things up with his four chins looking as rough and rusty as so many rasped French rolls.

The fellow, too, was so conceited, that really there was no bearing with him; for instance, if I left him in the parlour dusting the chairs, or rubbing the tables, directly my back was turned, off he'd be to the pier glass, and get attitudinizing before it, and arranging the nasty, greasy, figure 6 curl he had in the middle of his forehead, with his nasty oily fingers, or else—drat his impudence!—nothing would suit him, but he must go to the sideboard, and take out the clothes-brush, or, if that wasn't handy, the semicircular one we had to sweep the crumbs off the table-cloth with, and begin scrubbing away at his hair with it. And the nuisance of it was, bother take it! I *would* make the fellow wear powder, so that, if ever I went to brush my beautiful black German velvet dress, there I should have it with long white streaks upon it like the inside of a backgammon board, and all smelling of hair-powder and pomatum as strong as that Duffy's livery hat.

Then of an evening, nothing would suit my lord duke but he must needs go lolling against the post of the street-door with his great big lumpy legs—like the balustrades on Waterloo Bridge—crossed one over the other, picking his teeth with a bit of one of my pens, and ogling the girls, and making a noise with his lips after them as they went by—as if he was a perfect Adonis in plush—a—in plush—(tut! tut! it is very strange! I never can remember the name of those what-d'ye-call-'ems). Or if he wasn't at the street-door, wasting my time against the post there, the monkey would be perched up on the top step of the area ladder, with his cauliflower head poked over the rails, and either in full gossip with what he made me believe was his washerwoman (the wretch!) or else sneering away at the policeman, or making game of the soldiers as they passed the house, —both of whom, he told our cook, who told me, were low-class hanimals, and people that he could not condescend to sit down to table with—so there was no use hasking on 'em. The consequence of this was, that if I had to ring once of an evening for him, I had to ring at least a hundred times before I could get him to hear me. And when he did hear me, sneak would go to the street-door, and in he would come all of an imitation hurry, buttoning up his waistcoat as if he had been dressing. Only let me stir out of the house, too, for a minute, and as sure as eggs are eggs, I should find him when I came back with his four chins resting comfortably on the top of our parlour blinds, and staring out of window with all his might—as if he was a lord bishop of the land, and had nothing to do, and there were no such things as tea-cups to wash up, or British plate to clean,—which latter article, as every married lady knows, is only a cheap substitute for silver, provided you're rubbing it up every quarter of an hour, and if you're not, why it looks more like a very expensive substitute for brass. Though, as for washing up the tea-things! I really don't suppose the corpulent puppy did it above half-a-dozen times, at most, all the while he was with me. For, what do you think, gentle reader, the nasty good-for-nothing, deceitful, carneying peacock used to do? Why if he usen't to give that stupid, stupid cook of mine—who ought to have known better at her time of life—a kiss, to get her to do it for him; and I suppose that he must have thought his slobberings particularly precious, for, positively, if the red-haired monkey didn't go offering the same high terms to the maids, if they would only fill his coal scuttles for him, and—I blush for my sex when I say it—the minxes used to do it at the paltry price. What they can have seen in the man, I'm sure I can't make out; and I'm certain they didn't know one thing—any more than I myself did at that time—or they never could have allowed him to trifle with their very best affections in the shameful way he did—a nasty, wicked, deceitful "MARRIED MAN!"

--and that's what he was! When the wretch came to me, he told me he was a confirmed bachelor; but his livery (though shamefully spotted) was not half worn out, when, to my horror, I discovered that the brute was a hopeless, inextricable Benedict, with not only a fond wife to support—out of my larder—but no less than seven little incumbrances to bring up—on my cold meat, hang 'em! As a woman, of course, I 'm for universal matrimony all over the world—though with regard to those necessary evils called servants, I must confess, I am of a totally different opinion. For my part, I would have them all bound by law to remain as single, all their days, as spiders. But from the parental turn of the Footmen, Housemaids, and Cooks of the nineteenth century, I 'm afraid no Act of Parliament could be made binding enough to prevent the fond stupids from plunging headlong into wedlock and a chandler's shop; and when they find that a bountiful Providence doesn't send customers as quick as it does children to such people, then of course the husband and the father again becomes the footman and the bachelor, drat him!—while the wife and the mother gets her daily bread for her children out of her mangle, and her daily *meat* for them out of *your* pantry! In my eyes, the only way to prevent this frightful state of things, is for us housekeepers to see whether or not, by the high wages we are now giving for men-servants, we couldn't prevail upon some of the poor Catholic priests—who everybody knows have taken the vow of perpetual celibacy—to put on a *toupée*, and enter our service as footmen,—though, of course, from the proverbial warm-hearted disposition of the inhabitants of the "imirald isle," it might be as well to give notice—even in such a case—that "no Irish need apply."

For more than a month I thought that Duffy was as single as the very Gloucester he had for cheese, and so I should have believed him to my dying day, had I not noticed that he not only seemed too attentive by half to his washerwoman—who afterwards turned out to be his draggle-tail hussey of a wife—but also that the bundles of dirty clothes he sent to the wash, were considerably more corpulent, than, from the usual dirty appearance of his linen, I should have been led to expect. And it wasn't long before I found out the cause of it all; for one fine Monday morning, I happened to go into the pantry, and there lay the usual stout bundle of dirty linen, belonging to John Duffy, Esquire. When I opened it on the sly, I thought I should have fainted. There they were—very pretty indeed. —two pair of cotton stockings—one pair of cold fried soles—one cotton night-cap —half a raspberry jam tart—one day shirt—a large piece of a beef-steak pie—two dickies—six tallow candles—four white cravats—a hunk of cold bacon—one pair of drawers—and upon my honour, near upon half a hundred weight of coals stuffed inside of them.

But the beauty of it was, that not content with robbing me of my meat and coals, and candles and things, the villain must set to work pilfering our wine as well; and whenever Mr. Sk—n—st—n told him to decanter a bottle of port, or even sherry, I declare if the fellow didn't, while he stood at the sideboard, with his back turned to us, fill a good sized physic-bottle out of it every time, for his own private drinking. For a long time it struck me, that less wine went to the quart bottle than is usual even with wine-merchants; but I attributed this to the improvements which are going on in glass manufactories so rapidly, that bottles, apparently the same size as they used to be, are made, by some invisible arrangement at the bottom, to hold twice as little as they used to do; while they seem to be getting less and less so fast, that soon, instead of two pints making one quart, in wine and beer measure, as our schoolmasters foolishly taught us to believe, we shall find it just the very reverse; for shortly, the "Honourable Company of Free Vintners" will teach us that two quarts make one pint.

Of course, from this I suspected something was wrong, and longed for the time when I should find my gentleman out. Accordingly, one day seeing that Mr. Duffy was out of his pantry, and the key in his cupboard door, I just took the liberty of looking into it, and there, to my great delight, I saw several rows of physic bottles packed one a-top of another—with sawdust, too, as I 'm a Christian! and lying on their sides for all the world like a miniature bin of wine. I took up one of them, labelled "*this draught to be taken at bed-time;*" and I declare if it wasn't some of our very best port—then another, ticketed, "*the mixture as before,*" and hang me, if that wasn't a phial full of our very choicest brown sherry! and on reaching down a bottle divided into quarters, with directions, ordering, "*a fourth part of this gargle to be used whenever the throat is troublesome,*" and if that

one wasn't filled to the cork—I never knew such impudence!—with some of our very primest Cogniac brandy! "Hoity toity!" cried I, "so Mr. Duffy must needs have a private cellar of his own. No wonder Mr. Edward is always telling me, in his mean, insinuating way, as if he thought I drank them, that the wine and spirits go very fast."

I wasn't long before I had the whole of Mr. Duffy's small private cellar safe in my work-basket, and, in less than two minutes, fast in one of the cupboards of the sideboard. As it was lunch-time I determined to try "a draught to be taken in the morning" myself; for, to tell the truth I felt rather faint, and thought a glass of port couldn't hurt me. But didn't it though; for no sooner did I put it in my mouth than—ah, faugh!—oh! lud a mercy me! I never tasted such stuff. If the dirty, fat, lazy pig, hadn't been pouring the wine into a black dose bottle, without ever taking the trouble to wash it out first! "Oh, I wish to goodness gracious!" I cried, putting my hand to my stomach—for I felt far from myself—"I could only afford to give that dishonest mammoth of a Duffy notice to quit; and so I would this very moment, if it wasn't for that beautiful livery which ought to have another six months' wear in it at least!"

About this time, too, it seemed as if Fate—bother take her!—thought that that Duffy wasn't enough to fill my cup, so she must needs go throwing that Wittals in, to make it run over. For, as luck would have it, one evening, home comes Mr Sk—n—st—n with the joyful news, that the young ogre—missing the larder, no doubt—had grown tired of the few pleasantries connected with the legal profession, and had had the impudence to demand that he should be taken back again into my service—telling Edward to his face, that he'd learnt law enough in his office to know I had bound myself to keep him for these two years to come. Well, thought I, my fine gentleman, I could have told you as much; but, of course, I wasn't going to do so.

The next day, who should march into the house but the young imp himself, without so much as even a single button left on his beautiful jacket; and when I asked him what he had done with them, he told me quite coolly that he'd been gambling at dumps, and having staked his all, had lost the whole of my beautiful plated sugar-loafs at one unlucky throw! This put me in such a horrid pet, that I raised my hand to give the young monkey a box on the ears, which he should remember to his dying day, when, bless us and save us! if the whiskerless Turk didn't throw himself into one of the boldest attitudes of "the noble art" of self-defence, he began dancing about, too, and bobbing his head, and sparring away at me, saying, "Come on, old un! I should like to see you do it." "Oh, you wicked young coward," I cried; "what, would you strike a woman—augh!" "Wouldn't I though," upon my word the monkey answered, "if she goes hitting on me fust." I told him to take himself down stairs as quick as ever he could, and when Mr. Sk—n—st—n came home, we'd see if he would strike *him*.

Bother take the boy, there was no keeping him quiet anyhow! Now, for instance, I was obliged to go to the expense of having his livery done up, for, of course, I couldn't see the urchin going about the disreputable figure he was. Well, a day or two after I had got him to look something like decent, I wanted to go and see dear mother, merely to ask the good old soul, whether—as the heat was so oppressive—she had got a good receipt for making ginger beer, and any old stone bottles she could spare me. As I was only going that short distance, I thought there would be no use in taking Duffy away from his work—especially as I didn't see the necessity of letting him know who and what my friends were, or of pointing out to him that the merchant I had made out my respected father to be was merely a coal ditto, and the vessels which I had spoken so often of before him at meals, were merely two barges filled with the very finest knubbly "Lord Mayors." And as for taking that young Wittals to walk behind me as a protector, bless you! it was worse than useless. Besides, the young monkey had got a tongue as long as my arm, and I should have those shameful, wicked, false reports, flying all about the neighbourhood again, with their precious "Mrs. Sk—n—st—n's friends is only heavers." Heavers! pretty heavers, indeed!

Well, as I was saying, off I trotted to dear mother's, but as my luck would have it, she couldn't lay her hand on the receipt I wanted, anywhere. However, as Mrs. Lockley had given it to her, the good old soul had no doubt she would do as much for me. So I thought to myself, the best thing I can do is to go on

and see that sweet woman. Mother, with her usual kindness, wanted me to stay dinner; but I begged of her not to ask me to stop that day, as I had got a beautiful hot fillet of veal for dinner, (which I am very partial to,) but if she liked I would come on the morrow when it was cold, (which I do not like at all). Whereupon mother said as it was her washing day, I must take pot luck if I came; but knowing what *that* stood for at home, I suddenly remembered a pressing engagement I had, which, I regretted, would deprive me of the pleasure.

I though I should never have got to that sweet woman, Mrs. Lockley's; for really the weather did seem to me so oppressive, that, upon my word, I felt ready to drop; and if it hadn't been for the look of the thing, I do believe, I should have sat down to rest myself on one of the door-steps. I was so hungry, too, with my long walk, that I certainly should have gone into some pastry-cook's on my way, and destroyed my stomach with a lot of trash out of the house-keeping, if I hadn't known that it was close upon that sweet woman Mrs. Lockley's hour for luncheon.

When I got to Mrs. Lockley's, of course, with my usual luck, she had only got one or two baked apples and a little cold bullock's heart (which, though I'd go miles for when smoking hot with veal stuffing, plenty of currant jelly, and a plate as warm as warm can be, yet I can't even bear to look at it when it's cold). So, as I didn't relish this fare very much, I told Mrs. Lockley, when she apologised for the lunch, and asked me if I'd do as she did, that nothing on earth would give me greater pleasure, as, strange to say, they were two of my most favourite dishes; but, I added, I'm frightened to touch either, my love — for, to tell the truth, I've a bad cold upon me; and, as I know I can be frank with you, my dear, if you should happen to have such a thing as an oyster or two handy, I think it would do me good. When actually, the sweet woman, like a stupid, *would* send out for some expressly for me, though I begged and prayed of the kind soul not to put herself to all that trouble on my account — taking good care, however, not to overdo it this time; for I thought it was the least she could do for me after leaving me to pay the whole of that cab, in the disgraceful way she had. As Lockley was out of town, and as I remembered she hadn't seen our footman, and, besides, as I had got a love of a fillet of veal, why, I thought I couldn't do less after all her kindness than ask that sweet woman, Mrs. Lockley, to come and take a plain family dinner with us that day; which she said she would. Presently, off we started, and walked along chatting so comfortably, no one can tell.

Just as we had got near home, and I was thinking how nice and envious that sweet woman, Mrs. Lockley, would be, when she found poor us living in such superior style to herself, and that we kept two male servants instead of her little poking twopenny half-penny one—lo, and behold! all of a sudden, I saw a large crowd of dirty little boys collected in a ring across the road, right opposite our house. By the noise of the drums, I knew it was a sight, and I hurried along as fast as ever I could, for I do like to see them. As we approached, I heard the voice of one of those stupid street conjurors crying out as loud as he could, that as soon as there was ninepence in the ring, he would cut off some poor young gentleman's head. So I told that sweet woman, Mrs. Lockley, to come along for heaven's sake, or we shouldn't be in time; and on we tottled together as fast as my legs would carry me. On looking up at our house, I declare if there wasn't that stupid, stupid cook, and that lazy minx of a housemaid lolling out of one of the windows of my bedroom, and that John Duffy out of the other. I merely shook my parasol at them then, and went as near as I could to see the stupid nonsense. When I caught sight of the boy in the ring, who had come forward to allow himself to be beheaded, positively if it wasn't that abominable, wicked, incorrigible young imp of a Wittals of mine, who, having seen the trick done some hundreds of times before, and knowing very well that the ninepence never yet had been made up, was delighted at being a party to the stupid imposition, which, I dare say, he thought a capital joke. No sooner did I set eyes upon him, out there in the middle of the dusty road, in my beautiful claret and silver, (only just newly renovated too,) with his best hat down on the ground, and all the neighbours at the windows, laughing away at the gratifying idea of the Sk—n—st—n's grand page making such a scamp of himself—no sooner, I repeat, did I set eyes upon the disreputable young rip, than at him I rushed, right through the

little boys. But directly he caught sight of me, on went his hat, with all the coppers that had been collected in it, a-top of his head, and off he scampered, and I after him, parasol in hand, as hard as I could go, while after me came all the little dirty boys, hurraying and hooting, and hollowing out "Go it, missus,"—"Go it, tiger," until—finding I couldn't catch that Wittals—I turned round, and began laying my parasol about the noisy and impudent young vagabonds at my heels. And then, oh, la! the nasty young dogs! what must they do but begin pelting me with mud and all kinds of filth, right over my beautiful lace bonnet and love of a poplin dress—salmon shot snuff,—and kept on at it, even on my own door step, whilst I was jerking away at the bell, and hammering away at the knocker, trying to get that big fat elephant of a Duffy to saunter up to the door before I was one positive cake of mud from head to foot—for, drat those boys! the more I ran after them, the more they pelted me.

When I went to the parlour window, to shake my fist at the young urchins, who wouldn't go away from the house, but kept on hooting outside as hard as they could, who should I see on the other side of the way, laughing fit to burst all her hooks and eyes, but that vulgar woman, Mrs. Lockley, whom I, like a great big silly, had brought up to see the superior style in which we lived! Well, there always was something about the creature I didn't exactly like!

When I told dear, dear Edward of all that happened, and how that Wittals had been going on the very day after I had consented to receive him back to my service, he very justly said, that he wasn't at all surprised at anything that young vagabond did, for he was impudent as a London sparrow, and he had been quite sickened of him by his tricks at his office; in fact, he knew there was no getting the good-for-nothing scapegrace to do a thing. For instance, if he wanted a simple letter copied, and called out to him, "Wittals, what have you got in hand just now?" the scamp would be sure to answer, "An apple, please sir," or something just as aggravating. So Edward advised me, that the best thing I could do was to go down to the workhouse, and try and get them to take the boy back, which he was sure they would for a few pounds, if the case was properly represented to them. But I pretty soon told my gentleman that I was sure they would do no such thing (and if they would, I wouldn't.) For, to tell the truth, now that I had got two male servants in the house, I wasn't going to sink down to one again in a hurry; and, bother take it! to have to go ill again, may be, or leave my stingy Mr. Edward a second time—"*for ever!*" perhaps, before I could get him to let me have another. Besides, that great big lazy porpoise of a Mr. Duffy, was always grumbling about having to clean a few trumpery boots and knives, and talking about the families of quality he had lived in—(I never saw such quality!) where he had been accustomed to have a lad under him—so, all things considered, I really couldn't bring my heart to turn a poor orphan like that monkey of a Wittals into the cold streets, and, accordingly with my usual good nature, made up my mind to keep the pair of them—at least until their liveries were fairly worn out.

Upon my word, at times, I was sorry that I hadn't taken Edward's advice, for *that* Wittals made Duffy no better, and *that* Duffy only made Wittals much worse. Now, I dare say, the reader will imagine that, with two male servants in the house, and little or nothing for them to do, I might at least have got so much as a simple bell answered; but, oh dear, no! I might pull and pull as though I was up in a belfry pulling my arms off for a leg of mutton and trimmings; and yet, there Mr. Duffy would sit, roasting his fat calves before the fire, as unconcerned as a mute at a street door—with his precious "Oh, ah! let 'em ring again!"—while that idle vagabond of a Mr. Wittals sat stock still, with both his hands stuffed into the pockets of his mulberry pantaloons, as if they were made of cast iron, and grinning away, as though he thought it a capital joke to trifle with my feelings. Then, positively, too, if that Duffy didn't go and so inoculate that Wittals with his familiar ways, that, as for getting any respect out of the pair of them, Lord bless you! one might just as well have looked for civility from a cabman after paying him his legal fare. If I happened to meet either of them in the street, not so much as a touch of the hat could they treat me to; and do what I would, I could no more get them to put 'Mam' at the end of their sentences when they spoke to me, than if they had been a couple of clerks at a railway station. First, I should have that Wittals speaking of my little angel of a Catherine, as "Kitty,"

to my very face, though I had told him, over and over again, that the cherub's name was Miss Sk—n—st—n, and begged of him not to let me hear him 'Kitty' her again, if he wanted to stop in my house; but, as the monkey knew very well that I couldn't turn him out of it, of course he didn't care two pins about what I said. Then I should have that great fat Duffy coming strolling into the parlour as slow as an omnibus half full, and asking, "How many *we* should be to dinner to-day!"—putting me in such a passion with his "We's" (as if he was one of the family), that I used to say, "*We!* whom do you mean by *we*, I should like to know, sir? I and your master will dine at home to-day, and that's the only *we* I am acquainted with in this house; though, perhaps, by your *we's*, you'd like to sit down to the table with us—and, I'm sure, I shouldn't be at all surprised if you did, for you certainly seem to me always to forget who you are, and what you are, and where you came from."

But where was the good of wasting one's breath upon a great fat lazy lubber, that was dead to every moral as well as religious tie? Now, I think I have told the reader somewhere in my interesting little work, that one of my principal inducements in getting Edward to consent to my keeping a footman, was the standing it gives one, in this, alas! empty world, to have a fine handsome man-servant in an elegant showy livery to carry your prayer books behind you to church, and to come up to your pew and fetch them again after divine service, (which, thank goodness, I can safely lay my head on my pillow at night, and say, that ever since I have kept house, and had an example to set my servants, I have always made a point of attending—unless, indeed, I have known that one of those beggarly collections was going to take place at the doors.) Well! as I was going to say, upon my word, I had much better have taken no footman to church at all, as that heathen of a Duffy; for as soon as we stood up for the first hymn, and I turned round to observe how his livery looked among the congregated footmen, and whether he was paying a proper attention to his religious duties or not, there I should be certain to see him, directly he caught my eye, take his hat, and putting his handkerchief to his nose, to make believe it was bleeding, sneak down the aisle on tiptoe; and I should never clap eyes on the livery again until church was all over, when I should have him coming back smelling of beer and segars, enough to knock the whole congregation down—though where on earth he could have got it from, was more than I and our policeman could ever make out.

Was ever poor dear married lady so tormented in all her life? *That* Duffy was bad enough, as the reader can plainly see now; but *that* Wittals was ten times worse, as the reader shall see presently. Now, *par examp* (as we say at *Bologne-sur-mere*,) dear—dear—*dear* uncle Rowley, like a good generous old soul as he is, would go sending up to that cherub of a Kitty of mine, a beautiful little love of a pet lamb, that had the most heavenly fore and hind quarters I think I ever beheld in all my born days; and it was so nice and fat that it quite made my mouth water to look at it — even alive. Still it was so fond and tame, and that darling ducks-o'-diamonds of a Kitty of mine was so pleased with her tiddy-ickle barlam as she used to call it—bless her little eyes! that, though I couldn't look at the animal without thinking of mint sauce, and the animal cost me near upon a shilling a week for bread, and milk, and turnips, yet I thought as dear good uncle Rowley had sent it up, and as he was Kitty's god-father, and had neither chick nor child, and was actually rolling in money (if I might be allowed so strong an expression) I thought, I say, he might be offended, if it came to his ears that we had eaten the darling little pet for dinner, immediately after its arrival in town. So we put a sweet pretty blue sarsnet ribbon round its fat neck, and kept it in the garden by day, and the knife house by night. The worst of it was, too, that do what we would, we could not keep the little love's white coat clean in this grubby "metropolis of the world," though we scoured it well at least once a week in our own foot-bath; for directly after we had washed it, and put it out in the garden again, down would come the smuts so thick, that in less than half-an-hour one would have fancied the natural colour of the poppet's coat was pepper and salt; and what used to put me in such a passion was, if I went out in the garden of an evening, in my sweet white muslin skirt and black velvet body to fondle the dingy little brute, it *would* get *so* affectionate, I declare, and *would* come rubbing up against my flounces, until they looked as black as a coal heaver's stockings on a Saturday. But what annoyed me more than all was—

bother take the thing! — it would grow so fast, that, though I must have wasted at least a gallon of gin in trying to stop its growth, still it was all of no use, and I only kept making the creature so tipsy, that it would prance about like a mad thing, and half frighten me out of my life. Pet lambs are one thing, but the idea of going and bestowing your affections on a great hulking sheep with horns long enough to poke both your eyes out, was what I had no notion of doing. Plague take that cruel Wittals too! no sooner had he set foot in the house, and seen this new member of the family, than his great delight used to be to catch hold of the poor thing by the two horns, directly they began to grow, one in each hand, and keep pushing the animal backwards and forwards until really he made the beast as savage as a tiger, and taught it to butt so, that upon my word it would run at you with its head down, for all the world like one of those stupid Cornish wrestlers. As for that fat coward of a Duffy, positively he was so afraid of what in his stupid country dialect he called the "wicked mutton," that I couldn't for the life of me get the fellow to go near the poor thing; and if Wittals hadn't been there, it must have stopped out every night, and may be died of rheumatism from sleeping out on the damp grass, instead of in a comfortable warm knife-house. So matters went on, until Kitty's little pet got to be a great waddling monster of a sheep, and only grew more and more savage from being always tied up to our apple tree, and fatter and fatter from want of exercise, while all the time mutton kept getting higher and higher, from I don't know what, until at last it seemed to me a shameful sin to go wasting good wholesome turnips, at three bunches for fippence, on such a creature, when one of its legs would eat so beautifully, boiled, with some of *those very* turnips.

Well! like a thrifty housewife as I am, I had half made up my mind to have one of the great hulking pet's haunches, with red currant jelly, for dinner the next Sunday, while it was nice and young and tender, when dear mother luckily called in to see me, and I thought I would consult with her on the subject. On going to the window, to show her what prime condition the darling was in, I declare, if the brute hadn't got away from the apple-tree, and wasn't right in my flower-bed, making a hearty meal off the few double stocks and sweet-williams I had in my garden, and which I prided myself so much upon, and the Simmonds's were so jealous of. I gave a slight scream, and rang the bell for that dare-devil of a Wittals, knowing that it was no good looking for any assistance from that chicken-hearted stupid of a Duffy. But, of course, Wittals, as is always the case when he 's wanted, had slipped out after some more of that sticky sweet-stuff, which I 'm continually obliged to be taking away from him, and eating myself, to prevent him from spoiling his livery. So, as I couldn't stand still and see my beautiful sweet-williams eaten up before my very eyes, I ran down the garden steps, and catching-hold of the end of the rope, tried to drag the woolly cannibal back to the apple tree. But no sooner did I tug the wretch away from the flowers, than off it set scampering round and round me, until, I declare, it wound the cord all about my poor legs, for all the world as if I had been a peg-top, and it meant to send me spinning—which sure enough, whether he meant it or not, it did. For, directly it got my feet bound fast together with the rope, so that I couldn't stir an inch, "the wicked mutton," as Mr. Duffy called it, rushed full butt at me, and immediately up went my legs, and down I came bump on the grass, with a force that I felt for months afterwards. I set to screaming directly as loud as I could for mother and Duffy, and kicking with all my might,—for, my legs being tied, I, of course, couldn't get up, and there was the savage brute poking away with its horns, like the prongs of a pitchfork, at the cotton tops of my silk stockings. At last, just as I 'd got my poor feet free from the rope by my continued kickings, thank goodness! I heard the garden door slam to, and knew, by Duffy's puffing and blowing, and mother's "pshewing" away like a rocket, that assistance was at hand. But, alas! no sooner did the rampant beast catch sight of that Duffy's red plush thingomybobs, than, attracted by the colour, I suppose, off it scampered towards the porpoise; and no sooner did that coward of a Duffy catch sight of the rampant beast coming full gallop towards him, than he let fall, with fright, the broom he had come armed with to my help, and taking to his fat legs, ran round the garden, blowing like an asthmatic grampus, with the wicked mutton tearing after him like a woolly maniac. Just as he had got within a yard or so of me, and I had managed to raise myself on my hands and knees, oh! lud-a-

mercy me! the savage brute rushed full butt at him with such force, that the great fat hulking monster cried out, "O—oo!" and was pitched sprawling right on to my poor back, and down I went again, flop, with such force, that if the fellow, though no sylph, hadn't been as plump and soft as a feather bed, I do verily believe I should have been taken up a human pancake, and had to have been buried in one of the cracks in Dover cliffs, or some such horrible out-of-the-way place.

Poor dear respected mother—who up to this moment had been very prudent, and never left the garden-steps—the very minute she saw that that Duffy had fallen over me, and that "wicked mutton" jumping with all his might a-top of Duffy, rushed down to our rescue, shaking her handkerchief, like a stupid old thing as she is—for she ought, at *her* time of life, to have known that it would only have made the infuriated brute wilder than ever. And so to her cost it did; for no sooner did the animal see her, than at her it ran, and, just as she got close to our beautiful large variegated holly-bush, it gave such a poke at her, that back the dear respected old soul went, right into the middle of the horrid prickly shrub, and there the brute stood, butting away at her, and pushing her further and further into the bush, until, what with the agony of the sharp prickles at her back, and the fear of the furious animal's horns in front, I declare the poor dear old thing screamed in such a way, that it cut me to the quick—when I'd kicked and tumbled that mountain of a Duffy off my back—to fly for my own life, and turn a deaf ear, not only to her heart-rending cries, but also to her pathetic entreaties to bring either the kitchen poker or the spit, and drive the mad beast from her. And well can I understand her screaming now, for when that monkey of a Wittals came in again, and he'd got my dear respected mother out of the holly-bush, upon my word, if the poor old soul's back wasn't pierced all over with the fine-pointed prickly things, and as full of little holes as a captain's biscuit! and no wonder; for, as luck would have it, she'd got on my thin, fine Swiss cambric dress, which, having been quite spoilt at the washing, I had kindly made her a present of on her last birth-day.

Any gentle reader, in her proper senses, may readily suppose that after this I wasn't long in giving that over-grown coward of a Duffy notice to quit. Of course I didn't see the fun of keeping a man to walk after me as a protector who was frightened out of his wits by a trumpery "wicked mutton," which a mere whiskerless brat could take by the horns whenever he liked. But no sooner had I told the good-for-nothing that he would be pleased to leave my service that day month, than I declare if he didn't turn round and tell me to my very face, "that he would do so with all the pleasure in life," saying, "it was a place to take the very life out of a man" (I think so, indeed, with only two in family, and little or no plate to clean); and that he never knew what work was before in all his life (pretty work, indeed!—a couple of trumpery tea-cups to wash up of a morning, and a page to help him); so he actually had the impudence to think I had better pay him his month, and let him leave the wretched slavery that very minute, or else he knew he should have to take to his bed with illness, for he shouldn't be able to put out his hand to do a thing shortly from over-work, and then I should have to nurse him. Nurse him, indeed! Should I?—when all the time I knew it was only a mere make-believe to cheat me out of a month's wages. Oh! I do detest people that pretend they're ill just to gain their own selfish ends!

Accordingly I gave my delicate elephant to understand that he'd get no month's wages out of me, unless I first got a month's work out of him, to which my gentleman merely answered, between his teeth, "He'd see about that;" and he said it in such a nasty, spiteful way, that he convinced me he meant something horrible. Sure enough so he did; for when I rang the bell for him to bring up the tray, to lay the things for dinner, I all of a sudden heard the most tremendous crash, as if ten thousand chimney-pots had fallen through two thousand skylights. I rushed to the top of the kitchen stairs, and cried out, "Good heavens, Duffy! what's that?" when I declare if he hadn't the coolness to answer, "It's only me, mum, a breaking the plates and dishes." I tore down to the pantry, and told him I'd have him punished; and then, of course, it was, his "foot had slipped, and I couldn't punish him for a mere accident." "Accident, indeed!" I said to myself, as I marched up stairs again, "oh, yes! it's one of those many precious accidents which, even in the best regulated families, are done on purpose. But,

what could I do? I knew the spiteful good-for-nothing would swear till he was black in the face that his foot *did* slip; and how was poor I to prove to the contrary?

I declare the man went on so, that I soon saw I should be several pounds in pocket by paying the fellow what he wanted, and getting him out of the house as soon as possible. Now, there were my beautiful cut glass decanters, (which belonged to Mr. Sk—n—st—n's poor dear first wife,) well, nothing would suit my gentleman, but he must go washing them in scalding hot water, and then, pretending to be astonished because they went crack, flying in every direction. But, of course, that was the fault of the glass, and none of his—oh, no! Then, again, too, the revengeful scamp must go wiping all the dirty knives with my very best glass cloths, which I had bought new expressly for him, until they were as full of cuts and gashes as poor dear father's shoes when he 's got the gout. And, positively, do what I would, I could not prevent him from cleaning his shoes in my dress livery, until, what with the blacking and his carelessness, upon my word, his red plush thingomys were all over black spots, like the back of a lady-bird, and his beautiful white coat as grubby as the outside of St. Paul's. As for making him stir of a morning, too, I declare it was no use trying, for though I commenced ringing at six o'clock, to a minute, and kept on pulling away—determined that if the fat, lazy sloth wouldn't get up to see about my breakfast, at least he shouldn't have another wink of sleep,—yet I couldn't for the life of me get him to come up for the keys till near upon eight o'clock at the earliest; though how on earth he ever managed to snore through it all was a wonder to me, for it struck me it must be very like trying to take a nap in a belfry on the coronation day. But on going into my gentleman's room, one fine morning, upon my word, if the fat, lazy, cunning fox hadn't crammed one of his stockings into the mouth of the bell, until I declare it wouldn't speak any more than a married lady in the sulks. So, really and truly, when I came to think of it, was it worth while for a trumpery month's wages to let the fellow remain in the house till all my glass and crockery were broken to shivers, and my beautiful queen's-pattern plated coffee-pot, with silver edges, was all battered in, as horribly as the pewter quart measure at a fruit-stall. Accordingly, I made the best of a bad bargain, and packed the scoundrel out of the house, telling him not to expect a character from me. When he had gone, and I examined his livery to see whether by any manner of means I could have it cleaned for my next footman, I give the reader my word and honour, if the fat savage hadn't been wiping on the skirts of my beautiful white coat the dirty pens with which he 'd been answering the advertisements in the *Times*, and all the left sleeve was streaked over with ink, till it had as many black marks upon it as a mackerel's back.

As for that Wittals, there was no bearing with *him* either; for bad as he was before, I declare that if Duffy hadn't so inoculated him with all the airs of a grown-up footman, that, upon my word, he seemed to think it a positive disgrace to work for his living. So I told him, very quietly, I had been turning it over in my mind, and if he had any wish to better himself, I should be very happy to exert myself to find him an excellent situation, and make it a moral duty to give him a good character, which, I said, he knew as well as I did, he didn't deserve. And nicely I caught it for my kindness, after all; for, bother take it! he went on so shamefully in his new place, that I declare if his brute of a master didn't begin an action against us, for *giving a servant a false character;* and we had to compromise it by paying goodness knows how much!

However, I determined that this should be a lesson to me not to give any more good characters in a hurry, but to speak the truth in future. So, when that Duffy, who was out of place again six months, came to me, as thin as a German umbrella, and as meek as a pew-opener, to hope that I would look over what had passed, and say a good word for him, I told him pretty plainly, "Oh, yes! I 'd speak for him, and do him perfect justice, he might rest assured." Accordingly, I just gave a plain, unvarnished statement of all his goings on, and shameful pilferings, when, of course, the party refused to have anything at all to do with him. And then, bother take it, if *he* didn't get some pettifogging lawyer to bring an action against us for libel (truth is a libel, Edward says)—so that, positively, this time we had to pay goodness knows how much more again for *giving a servant a true character.*

This very naturally convinced me that the only safe way of acting was to refuse to give any character at all to servants. Accordingly, when that stupid, stupid cook — whom I 'd little or no fault to find with, excepting that she was so taken up with Wittals and Duffy, that I thought it best to give her notice to go when they did, lest she should set the new servants against their place—accordingly, I say, when she wished to know when it would suit me to see the lady with whom she was going to live, I told her that she needn't think of sending any of her ladies to me, for I had made up my mind not to say *one* word about her conduct either one way or the other. And then — drat that common law, which Mr. Edward will have is the perfection of common sense — we had another plaguy action brought against us, and had a third time to pay as much as would have bought us two beautiful opera pit tickets for the season, for taking the bread out of a person's mouth, and *refusing to give a servant any character at all*.

This little insight into human nature made me so disgusted with servants, and taught me that they were such a bad, worthless, ungrateful set, that of course I showed very little consideration for their trumpery feelings afterwards, and I kept bundling them out of the house, one after another so quickly, that I had them coming in and going out as fast as the people at the Bank of England on a dividend-day. But after a year or so of this continual changing, Mr. Edward did get *so* fidgetty, and to tell the truth, I myself got *so* sick of writing answers to those stupid advertisements of "Want Places," and spending a whole fortune in postage-stamps, for a pack of letters to your "GOOD PLAIN COOKS," and "STEADY, ACTIVE, YOUNG MEN, who have no objection to travel," (I dare say they haven't—and no more should I have, for the matter of that, if any one would pay my expenses for me,) that, upon my word, at last I thought it might save me a world of bother, if—as the creatures were always grumbling at being over-worked in my establishment — I paid some attention to what they said for once in a way, and allowed them to have another pair of hands to help them. And then, odds-bobs and butter-cups! directly I had been great silly enough to listen to the complaints of one of them, of course all the others expected I should do as much for them!

First, the nursery-maid, owing to the increase of my family, (for I went on blessing Edward with another little tiddy-ickle-petsy-wetsy of a beautiful baby—with, thank heaven, all its dear little limbs right and straight—regularly every eighteen months)—first, the nursery-maid, I repeat, found it impossible to mind so many young children without an under one to assist her. And when I, like a ninny, had coaxed Edward to allow her to have what she wanted, then, of course, the housemaid (directly we had an extra story put on to our villa, from sheer want of bed-rooms) must find out that the house was too large for her to attend to single-handed, so *she* must needs want an under one as well. Well, when I nad wheedled Mr. Edward into that too—for as he very beautifully and philosophically said, throwing up his hands and tearing his hair, "Oh, anything you like, for peace and quiet"—then the cook must walk into the parlour and tell me, that we were so many in family now, and there were so many dinners to cook—one for the nursery, one for the kitchen, and one for the parlour—that really the plates and dishes were more than one person's time to wash up, and she was sure her constitution would give way under it unless she had a scullery-maid to help her. So then, I had to carney, and fondle, and flatter *that* Edward for days, and when that would'nt do, to get out of temper and sulk for weeks with him together, in order to let the poor cook have a maid under *her*, too, in the kitchen. But, then, the worst of it was, that what with the upper nurserymaid and the under nurserymaid—the upper housemaid and the under housemaid—the cook and the scullery maid—and the footman and the page into the bargain—positively, I had our poking villa so full of servants, that we were as short of beds as a country town during the assizes: and, as our lease had still fifteen years to run, and since, owing to that bothering, rattling railway at the back of us, we couldn't get anybody to take it off our hands, and as—plague take those maids—I could *not* get them to sleep three in a tester anyhow, why, drat it, there we had to go putting another and another story to our residence, till I declare our villa looked like a jar with three covers on it.

However, if I must tell the truth, I didn't object to this so much after all; for I felt that the great, big, grand house, we had now got over our heads, and the

large retinue of servants we had at our backs, did give us such a position in this empty world, and such a footing in hollow-hearted society, that—notwithstanding Mr. Edward was always telling me, I and my servants were driving him into the Queen's Bench as fast as he could gallop, or even a National Theatre could take him —still for the sake of my four poor dear children, and those yet to come, I determined not to give way—even so much as a scullery maid—no! not if I had to be afflicted with a violent neuralgia again—or even St. Vitus's dance in the height of summer, for it.

But I was far from being as happy in the midst of all this grandeur as I had, like a stupid girl as I am, foolishly expected; for no sooner had I got eight servants dangling at my heels, than lud-a-mussy-me! if I could get as much attention or as much peace and quiet as when I had only one—a mere servant of all work—to wait upon me. If I wanted anything done, positively, it didn't seem to be anybody's place to do it. For instance, let me tell the footman to sweep up a few crumbs from under the table, of course it wasn't *his* place—but he'd send the housemaid; then let me tell the housemaid to bring up some more coals, of course it wasn't *her* place—but she'd send the footman. If I told the upper nurserymaid to make me a little warm water-gruel, for my little angel's bottle (love its sweet eyes!) oh dear me, no! even this was too much, it wasn't *her* place—but she'd tell the under one. If I went down stairs, too, to see about dinner, and just asked the cook to wash a trumpery basin for me—bless you! she couldn't think of soiling her delicate hands with a dish-cloth; no! it wasn't *her* place—but tell the scullery-maid. Augh! the lazy, good-for-nothing pack of leeches! And what did they think *was* their place, then, I should like to know! I can tell them what *I* think their place was! and that's—a very snug berth, with little or nothing to do, but to try their hardest to eat me out of house and home—and *that's* what it was.

CHAPTER XVI.

AND THE LAST, (*thank goodness! say I.*)

WHICH MY COURTEOUS READERS MUST READ, IF THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT'S ABOUT, AS I'VE NO ROOM TO TELL THEM.

Fare thee well! and if for ever,
Why, for ever——

POPULAR SONG, *by Byron, which, for the reason above mentioned, I haven't space to finish.*

WELL, I'll give you my word, gentle reader—though I dare say you'll hardly believe it—such was the state of things I got to at last; everything was going crooked in the house—the under nurserymaid quarrelling with the upper nurserymaid, the upper housemaid complaining of the under housemaid, and that brute of a footman ill-treating that monkey of a page—until it was nothing else but jingle-jangle, wringle-wrangle, from the moment we got up in the morning to the very instant we went to bed at night. But I do think I could have borne it all, if it hadn't been for one dreadful "*contretemps*," which fairly drove me out of my senses.

You see, our footman had, like a stupid, fallen down with the urn, and scalded himself so bad, that I packed him off as an in-door patient to the hospital—as it struck me I couldn't do less—and the one I had after him I did fancy would have turned out such a jewel; but, alas! alas!—let me restrain my feelings.

When he came after the place, I thought I never saw such a fine, honest, open countenance in all my born days; and the man did appear so clean, and was *so* respectful and meek, and *so* willing and good-tempered looking, and was so fond of children, that, I declare, if he didn't ask me if he might shake hands with my little Kitty (who was now nearly seven, and, as he said, as fine and pretty a girl for her age as he'd ever beheld, and so like its mamma.) The sole stipulation he made, was that he might be allowed to go to church at least twice every Sunday—though this only pleased me the more with him. And when he told me he

had lived for the last eighteen years with one of the bishops of the land (bless us and save us! I said to myself, there's a character for you!) and that the only cause for his leaving was, that his poor master, who had always been a kind one to him, had got embarrassed in railway speculations, and been obliged to break up his palace in the country. His lady, however, was staying in town, and would be happy to see me any morning I pleased to name; so, as I had no idea of letting such a treasure of a servant slip through my fingers, I made the appointment for the very next day. The Bishop's lady—who had the first floor over a very nice pastry-cook's in May-fair, for a temporary residence in London—received me with great condescension, and told me with almost tears in her poor eyes, that Thompson's account was very true, and that if anything in their difficulties grieved her more than another, it was parting with such an estimable treasure as that good, honest, worthy man. I don't think I ever saw such a perfect lady in all my life. Her dress though, it struck me, was a little too showy for a person in her station; and (between ourselves) when I looked at her steadfastly in the face, I declare if the beautiful high colour she had got on her cheeks wasn't as artificial as a grand Banquet on the stage. Still, as I knew that the heads of our mother church had none of your tight-laced, puritanical notions about dress—and if they had, why they confined them chiefly to the lead-coloured quaker-cut liveries of their men-servants—I didn't see why a poor wife shouldn't wear what she liked. Her ladyship apologized for the absence of his lordship, informing me that he was down in the country attending to his flock, so that I at once saw the dreadful straits to which they were reduced, and couldn't help feeling how hard it must be for the poor man at his time of life to have to begin to work for his living. And I'm sure, from her ladyship's charming manners, which—though, perhaps, a *leetle* too free for the vulgar world—still proved to me that she had been accustomed all her days to better things. She spoke of Thompson in such affectionate terms, that I couldn't help thinking *she* was the best of mistresses, while *he* was the best of servants; and poor *I*, the luckiest of women, to have fallen in with such people. Just as I was about to say "good morning," and take my leave, a dashing cabriolet drove up, and her ladyship, on looking through the window, exclaimed, "De-har, de-har me! if it isn't the archebeeshop, my de-har reverend uncle! why what ever keyan have brought 'York' up to town. Perhaps you will be keyind enough to exkeyuse me." In my politest way I answered, "Certainly," and sailing like a swan out of the room, I determined to have a good stare at the archbishop as I marched down stairs. When I peeped through the window in the passage that gave into the shop, there he was, dressed in the first style of fashion, eating brandy cherries with his white kid gloves on, and — what at the time I couldn't for the life of me understand — a pair of the most beautiful little curly mustachios I ever recollect to have seen in all my born days.

Well, the first night after that treasure of a Thompson had entered our service, and we had been in bed from four to five hours, judging by our rushlight, I was dreaming that I was flying so nicely, just skimming along the surface of the earth, for all the world as if I was a great goose, and saying to myself, "Ah! now I see how it's done; you have only got to hold your breath, and wag your arms—so," when I was awoke by the sound of a pair of heavy boots tramping up stairs. First, I thought it was that plaguy kitten, playing with Edward's Wellingtons, outside the door, and dragging them down the stairs after her; but, lud-a-mercy-me, on looking at the door, I declare if I couldn't see, by the bright line of light shining underneath it, that somebody was in the house. So I bounced out of bed, and turning the key, (for we had only got the night bolt down,) I snatched up my beautiful amethyst brooch off the dressing-table, as well as (between ourselves) my false front tooth out of the tumbler of water there, and popping them both under the pillow, I jumped into bed again, determined to sell them only with my life. I had no sooner succeeded in waking Mr. Sk—n—st—n, who sleeps as heavy as an alderman at church, than positively the handle of the door began to move. Up jumped Edward, and I clung to him like a barnacle, saying, in a low whisper, "What are you about?—would you risk your precious life when you know it's not insured?" But out he got, and down I dived under the clothes almost to the bottom of the bed, expecting every minute that I should be dragged out by my hair, and forced by a couple of villains, holding a pistol at each of my ears, to

give up not only my love of a brooch to pacify them, but even my superb ivory front tooth, which had, at least, five shillings' worth of gold about it. The first thing I heard when I took my fingers out of my ears, was the sound of a stranger's voice, saying, "Do you know as your street-door is open?" Then, coming up from under the bed-clothes, and putting my head half out between the curtains, while I held them together as close as ever I could, there I saw a great, big, black policeman standing at our bed-room door, with his dark lantern in his hand, and Mr. Edward, in the chintz dressing-gown I made him out of the old covering to our easy chair, staring at him with all his eyes, and with his old militia sword in one hand, and the rushlight out of the shade in the other. On taking a second look at the policeman, whose face I thought I remembered somewhere, oh, heavens! if I didn't know, by the size of his whiskers, it was the impudent puppy who had winked at me over the parlour blinds. And then, drat his impudence, if he didn't turn his bull's eye full upon me in my nightcap, and this made me blink so, that positively I do believe the fellow must have thought that I was winking at him. So I pulled the curtains to, as quick as I could, and giving a slight scream, I told Edward to go down stairs with the man that very moment, and make our treasure of a footman get up and see whether the spoons and forks were all right. He couldn't have been gone five minutes, when back Mr. Sk—n—st—n came, tearing up stairs, in a towering passion, with the gratifying information that my treasure of a footman, who had stipulated to go to church, at least twice every Sunday, and lived for the last eighteen years with one of the bishops of the land, had gone off with the whole of our silver plate, and left nothing but that bilious-looking "British-Britani" behind him.

Of course, Mr. Edward made out that it was all *my* fault, and would have it that if I'd had a grain of sense in my head, I might have seen that the character was false, and the bishop's lady a common impostor—as, indeed, her reverend ladyship turned out. For when I went after her the next day, to give it her well, I learnt that she, too, had decamped from her lodgings the very same night as her inestimable treasure of a Thompson, without paying the week's rent, and leaving nothing behind her but an empty rouge pot, and a hair trunk full of brickbats.

I needn't tell the reader, I suppose, that I never heard the last of this; and positively, I was no sooner out of one scrape than, with so many bothering servants about one, I was into another.

You see everybody worth speaking of had left town for the season, and as I wouldn't for the world have had it thought that I hadn't gone for a trip on the Continent, I was forced, owing to Mr. Edward's stinginess, and continual declarations that he was being ruined, to paper up the drawing-room blinds, and shut up all the shutters in front, to make believe that I was either at Paris, or Margate; while all the while I was living at the back of the house, very nearly in the dark, and like a vegetable had grown so white from mere want of light, that, positively, my face had no more colour in it than a potato-shoot in a coal-cellar. So, as my fine gentleman was taking his pleasure at the Warwick Assizes, and wouldn't give me his consent to leave London, why I started off one fine morning without it, sending a letter for Mr. Edward, telling him that I had gone down to Gravesend, and leaving word with the servants, that I had gone up the Rhine. Then, packing up my carpet-bag and bonnet-box, and luckily catching the "Father of the Thames" at Hungerford-market, I jumped on it, and was soon at the end of my voyage. But Mr. Edward—just like his mean spite—wouldn't send me the money I had written to him for; consequently, as lodgings were so high, and those bad, gassy shrimps so dear, and the donkey-boys so extortionate, and I'd had enough of tea-parties at that stupid Windmill Hill, and was tired of those twopenny-halfpenny fêtes at Rosherville Gardens, and the housekeeping money I had brought with me was nearly all gone—why, in a fit of disgust, one evening, I packed up my carpet-bag and bonnet-box again, and putting myself on board the sixpenny opposition steamer, was soon landed at London Bridge—though I had expressly bargained with the cheats to take me on to Hungerford.

When I got home, I was astonished to see all the drawing-room shutters of the house open, and such a blaze of light in the room, that if I hadn't known that Edward was still at the assizes, I should have declared some one had been lighting up my chandelier and candelabras in my absence. I went over to the other

side of the way, and then, if I didn't see such a number of shadows, moving to and fro, on the blinds, that I plainly perceived the room was full of company and then I could tell by the motions of one of the black things handing some article or other to some one, who was drinking something, that a grand evening party was going on in my first floor, without my knowing a word about it. So I went to the door, and gave a gentle ring, so as not to alarm the company. Presently it was opened by that scullery-maid dressed out,—oh! you should have seen the thing—mercy! how she was dressed to be sure! Directly she saw me, she made a rush towards the stairs, but knowing by her dress and manner that something was wrong, I stopped her by catching hold of the skirt of her trumpery shilling-a-yard crimson, French Poplin dress—with a broad satin stripe upon it, to make it look rich—and, pulling it all out of the gathers so nicely, dragged the tawdry, fal-lal minx into the back parlour, and turned the key upon her. Then I crept on tip-toe up stairs to the drawing-room door, where I stood listening to all that was going on within. "Will yer hallow me to hoffer yer some of this ere am, Miss," said what I could have sworn was the young man at our grocer's.—"You are very keyind, certingly, Mr. Roberts," said that grand affected bit-of-goods of my upper housemaid. "Come, Miss Saunders," said my footman, "you aint a doing nuffin; make yerself at home, I beg. Will yer allow Mrs. Fisher to send yer just a mouthful of her hexcellent kawphy." "You 're very perlite, Mr. Heddard," answered that under nursery-maid; "since yer so pressing, I'll just try a wine-glas of that there dog's-nose, and then, if the kimpany his hagreeable I'll take the libbity of proposin a toast." And when they had all answered, "Ho, yes, certingly," the barefaced minx said, "Here 's hold missus! and hopen has how her trip hup the Rhind will keep her a good month longer at Gravesend." And then, after a general titter, I could hear them all getting up from their chairs, and saying one after another, "Here 's hold missus!" and sure enough here 's hold missus it was, for in I bounced among them just at that moment, and then it was—"Oh dear, who would have thought it,"—and there was *such* a scene, no one can tell. Off fainted that under housemaid, right into the arms of Mr. Roberts, and down went my glasses and decanters out of Mr. "Heddard's" hands, who endeavoured to hide himself under the table, and then over it went; for up jumped Mrs. Fisher from her chair, upsetting my best china tea set in her alarm, while some hid themselves behind the door, and others behind the satin damask ottomans. Then away they all slunk, first one and then another, whilst I was giving it to that Mrs. Fisher, who had got her hair curled for the grand occasion. And when I 'd given *her* notice to quit, I went down into the kitchen, and did the same to *every one of them* there, telling them they need none of them expect any character from me.

On Mr. Edward's arrival, which was just upon a fortnight afterwards, I felt it my duty, of course, to let him know all that had occurred, and what I had done; but my fine gentleman didn't say a word, and only walked whistling up and down the room; and when I told him that I couldn't make out what had come to servants now-a-days, for that, do what I would, I could not get a good one, he had the impudence to turn round and say, "No; and you never will, as long as you live, Madam."

"And why shouldn't I, Mr. Clever?" I inquired.

"Because, Mam, good mistresses make good servants."

"Well, indeed!" I answered, "I do admire that. I should rather think it was just the very reverse, and that good servants made good mistresses. I suppose, then, you mean to say that I am not fit to have the management of my own house!"

"I do, Caroline. Ah, you may stare; but management, as you call it, or government, as I term it, is not quite so easy a science as you seem to imagine. Every family is in itself a little kingdom, and it requires almost as much knowledge to rule wisely in the one as in the other."

"Very pretty!" I said. "Pray go on; perhaps you will tell me how I *am* to govern, as *you* call it?"

"Why, madam, there are but two ways. Human nature can only be ruled through its love or through its fears. The one *leads* our fellow-creatures to serve us as *willing friends*, the other *forces* them to serve us as *unwilling slaves*. It is for you and other mistresses to choose between the two—remembering that it is

the natural disposition of kindness to beget kindness, and of tyranny to beget rebellion?"

"Oh, indeed!" I replied. "Then I suppose you would like your system of kindness carried out in the kitchen? and nicely they'd treat you for it!"

"Indeed, I think not. At any rate, the stake is so little that it is worth the risk; and I, for one, have such faith in the power of kindness, *combined with firmness*, that though I don't mean to say but that you might occasionally meet with ingratitude, still that would merely be the exception that proves the rule. The heart has been so wonderfully constructed that it has not been left to us to choose whether we would be thankful or not for benefits received; but gratitude has been made an animal instinct. The very dog likes the hand that fosters it, and I do not think servants worse than dogs — though you and many other ladies, I know seem to do so. Do you not expect from your domestics that they should consider your interest theirs, and yet you forget that the first step in the process is to make their happiness yours. How did they manage in the olden time? There was none of this hubbub about bad servants then, and none of this continual changing and changing; but the old servant's son grew, like his father, to be grey in the service of the same family. And why was this? Because he was looked upon, and treated, and loved *like one of the family*.

"Very pretty talk," I answered; "then, I dare say, you would like them to come and sit down at the same table with us?"

"They did so then, in *many* families, and certainly in *all* families of the same rank as our own. And what was the consequence? Why they felt, as they ate at the same board, that they participated in the comforts and property of their master, and consequently had the same desire as he had to increase the one and protect the other."

"Well, then," I answered, "why not have yours up, and let them dine with you every day, if you prefer their company to mine, for *I'm* not going to sit at the same table with them, I can tell you!"

"No, Caroline, society has so altered since the time I am speaking of, that he who would endeavour to return to the old custom must be more case-hardened against the world's ridicule that I am. To be candid, I am too much of a moral coward to be a moral Quixote. Society, as at present constituted, is so based upon pride, vanity, and show, that the principal struggle of life, in what is called the "genteel world," is how to trick your neighbour into the belief that you are twice as rich as you really are—a species of moral swindling, or obtaining the world's estimation under false pretences. And what comes of all this? Why, they who have but their three or four hundred a-year must make it appear to the world that they have a thousand, and all this by good management, as it is termed —or in plainer words, by pinching the stomach to adorn their back."

"Well, sir," I stammered out, for I was getting in a passion, "proceed—pray proceed—I'm quite interested with the rubbish."

"As I was saying, then, Madam, we put ourselves to all kinds of unnecessary expense to gain the good opinion of mere acquaintances and comparative strangers, who don't care a snap of the fingers for us; and in order to do this, and 'make both ends meet,' as we call it, we stint ourselves, and those about us, of a thousand little luxuries which would make home dear and happy, wholly regardless of either the feelings or the esteem of those who live under the same roof with ourselves, and whose affection can add so much to our comfort."

"Oh, yes, certainly," I added; "I'm perfectly of your opinion,—let the servants do just as they please,—and a deal of comfort at home we should have then."

"*Your* fault, and the fault of many other ladies I could name, is, that you have your servants, like your furniture, for *show*, though, unlike your furniture, you don't think you can *spoil them*, however much you *use* them. And then you wonder that they don't treat you with respect, but take every advantage they can of you. You carry out your contract to the mere dry letter with them, and yet are continually grumbling because they don't carry out theirs to the spirit with you. Only let mistresses be kind, *yet firm* with their servants, and at the same time speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of them, to one another and depend upon it, the laws of mere human nature are such, that servants, with few exceptions, will be willing, obedient, and devoted to them."

Then my fine philosopher, having concluded his moral lecture, went on telling me, first, that my love of display had ruined him; and next, that he had made up his mind to turn over a new leaf, and to cut down a few of the showy extravagances at home, instead of beggaring himself for the sake of my mere acquaintances; and lastly, that the first step he intended to take was to reduce the eight servants he had in his house to two at the most.

"Then all I can say is, sir," I replied, "that you must get rid of me also; for I 'm not going to stop in it, sir, I can tell you, to be pointed at by the whole world as a lady who had once kept her eight servants, and now can only afford to keep her two."

And the only reply the brute made me was, "That I might do as I pleased."—"Indeed!" said I to myself, "I see what it is, my grand Turk; I must read you another part of my strong lessons, and if I don't have you down on your knees for all this, why my name 's not Sk—n—st—n." So, what did I do, but I rose from my chair in a most stately way, and looking divorces, or at least separate maintenances, at him, I marched out of the room as dignified as a drum-major. Having written a very strong letter to the monster, telling him that his ill-treatment had driven me to dear, dear respected mother's, and that I hoped and trusted he wouldn't come after me, as I now really, positively, and truly, *had* left him "FOR EVER," I was no sooner out of the door than I began to repent of what I had done, for I remembered mother's maxim, that husbands never came after their wives twice, and I was even doubtful how she would receive me under the circumstances. Sure enough, too, I didn't meet with the welcome from her that she gave me on the previous occasion; and drat it! if, after a week had elapsed, and no Mr. Sk—n—st—n had come, she didn't tell me I had better go back. But I told her, "I wouldn't go near the place—no, not for the whole world—for fear he should see me;" adding that, as all the servants were going at the end of the month, he'd be sure to come and fetch me when he was left alone in the house, and *wanted me* to get him some more." Oh! they are so selfish, these men.

After three weeks had gone by, and still no Mr. Sk—n—st—n, mother told me that the thing looked very serious, and said, "she would go round to Edward with me, and either force him to take me back, or make me a handsome allowance; for, to tell the truth, she couldn't afford to keep me any longer, unless she was paid for it."

When we got to our villa, what should I see, the very first thing, but my beautiful stair-carpets hanging out of window, with a large auctioneer's bill pasted on them, announcing that all our costly furniture, together with the valuable lease of our desirable premises, was to be sold "without reserve" that very day, at that very hour; and when I went into the place, I declare if all the carpets and oil-cloths hadn't been taken up, and all the things ticketed, and huddled together in confusion, while the drawing-room was as full of brokers as it could hold.

In my stupid way, I had been overdoing it again; for, on making inquiries, I found that Mr. Edward, disgusted at being left alone in that great big house, without even a wife or a servant to wait upon him, and, moreover, having received a letter from Mrs. Y—pp, his mother-in-law No. 2, saying that she purposed, at Christmas, coming to spend another month with her "dear boy, at his beautiful villa," had rushed off and taken up his residence in a common boarding-house in G—ldf—rd Str—t, Russell Square, near the Foundling Hospital, where I am at present staying, and where I intend to stay so long as Mr. Edward does, for if I leave him again, "FOR EVER," my name's not

C—R—L—NE SK—N—ST—N,
Late of Duvernay Villa,
P—rk V—ll—ge, R—g—nt's P—rk.

P. S. I stop the press to announce that Mr. Sk—n—st—n has just got hold of an early copy of this book, and oh! Lord-a-mercy me! I'm a ruined woman!

THE END.

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